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Enforcing Boundaries:

Globalization, State Power and the Geography of Cross-border Consumption in

Tijuana, Mexico

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Communication

by

Magalí Murià Tuñón

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel Hallin, Chair
Professor Robert Alvarez
Professor Gary Fields
Professor Christena Turner
Professor Elana Zilberg

2010

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The dissertation of Magalí Murià is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2009

DEDICATION

Para Enrique y Diego

A mis padres, Julia y José María

EPIGRAPH

El sur también existe
Mario Benedetti (1920-2009)

Con su ritual de acero
sus grandes chimeneas
sus sabios clandestinos
su canto de sirena
sus cielos de neón
sus ventas navideñas
su culto de Dios Padre
y de las charreteras
con sus llaves del reino
el Norte es el que ordena

Pero aquí abajo, abajo
el hambre disponible
recurre al fruto amargo
de lo que otros deciden
mientras el tiempo pasa
y pasan los desfiles
y se hacen otras cosas
que el Norte no prohíbe.
Con su esperanza dura
el Sur también existe.

Con sus predicadores
sus gases que envenenan
su escuela de Chicago
sus dueños de la tierra
con sus trapos de lujo
y su pobre osamenta
sus defensas gastadas
sus gastos de defensa
con su gesta invasora
el Norte es el que ordena.

Pero aquí abajo, abajo
cada uno en su escondite
hay hombres y mujeres
que saben a qué asirse
aprovechando el sol
y también los eclipses
apartando lo inútil
y usando lo que sirve.
Con su fe veterana
el Sur también existe.

Con su corno francés
y su academia sueca
su salsa americana
y sus llaves inglesas
con todos sus misiles
y sus enciclopedias
su guerra de galaxias
y su saña opulenta
con todos sus laureles
el Norte es el que ordena.

Pero aquí abajo, abajo
cerca de las raíces
es donde la memoria
ningún recuerdo omite
y hay quienes se desmueren
y hay quienes se desviven
y así entre todos logran
lo que era un imposible
que todo el mundo sepa
que el Sur,
que el Sur también existe

The south also exists
Mario Benedetti (1920-2009)

With its ritual of steel
its great chimneys
its secret scholars
its siren song
its neon skies
its Christmas sales
its cult of God the Father
and of epaulets
with its keys
to the kingdom
the North is the one
who orders

But down here, down
hunger at hand
resorts to the bitter fruit
of what others decide
while time passes
and pass the parades
and other things
that the North doesn't forbid.
With its hard hope
the South also exists.

With its preachers
its poison gases
its Chicago school
its owners of the Earth
with its luxurious costume
and its meager frame
its spent defenses
its expenses of defense
with its epic of invasion
the North is the one who orders.

But down here, down
each in their hideaway
are men and women
who know what to grasp
making the most of the sun
and eclipses
putting useless things aside
and using what is useful.
With its veteran faith
the South also exists.

With its French horn
and its Swedish academy
its American sauce
and its English wrenches
with all its missiles
and its encyclopedias
its war of galaxies
and its rich cruelty
with all its laurels
the North is the one
who orders.

But down here, down
near the roots
is where memory
omits no memory
and there are those
who defy death for
and die for
and thus together achieve
what was impossible
that the whole world
would know
that the South,
that the South also exists

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Epigraph	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Maps.....	xiii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Curriculum Vitae	xxi
Abstract of the Dissertation	xxv
Introduction	1
1. Welcome to Tijuana: of Legends and Stereotypes, Borders and Boundaries	1
2. Global and Local Scopes: States and Borders in the De-Territorialization Debate.....	9
3. Crossing and Enforcing Boundaries: Text and Matter Across the North-South Divide	14
4. “El Consumo es Bueno Para Pensar”: Thinking Consumption in the U.S.-Mexico Border.	20
5. The Territorial Aspects of Power: Nation-States and the Spatial Dimension of Consumption.	26
6. The Politics of Infrastructure: Identity, Discipline, and the Imposition of Meaning.	34
7. Dissertation Work Plan: Mapping Subjectivity, Premises and History in Tijuana’s Geography of Consumption.	42
8. Theoretical Borders and Bridges: Geographies of Consumption and the Field of Communication.....	47
9. Stories of a Ghost Subject: Data, Perceptions and Methodology.....	50

Chapter 1. “Too Far from God, too Close to the United States”:	
Consumption Cultures in Tijuana.....	59
1. Introduction.....	59
2. Goods, Place and Meaning in Tijuana’s Everyday Life	61
3. Material Culture and Geographical Mobility of A Cosmopolitan Community ..	66
4. Consumption and Identity in the Absence of the National Market	72
5. A Broken American Dream: Local Consumer Cultures and the National Economy	79
6. Hybrid Landscapes: Fluidity, Urban Poverty, and Domestic Transnational Practices	84
7. The landscape in the Body: Borderlanders, Binationals, Hybrids and Monsters	90
8. Conclusion	97
Chapter 2. Mexico in Tijuana. the Imagined Community and the Institutional State.....	102
1. Introduction.....	102
2. Economic Territoriality and the Aduana de Tijuana.....	104
3. Beyond the Homeland: The Perímetros Libres.....	105
4. The Double Edge of Territorial Control and Cross-National Consumption: Expropriations and the Free Trade Zone	107
5. Political and Physical Connectivity: Statehood and Transportation.....	114
6. The Institutions and Networks of Mexico’s Imagined Community: National Television and the Nationalization of the Electric Industry	121
7. Economic Policies of Integration: Centrally Planned Border Development	127
8. The Territories of Currency: Monetary Integration and the Peso Devaluation.....	133
9. Urban Planning and Cultural Territoriality: The Zona Rio and the Construction of CECUT.....	140
10. Conclusion.....	145
Chapter 3. Territoriality Beyond Borders: The U.S. Government and the Imperative of Sovereignty	151
1. Introduction.....	151
2. Materializing Division: The Ports of Entry and the Town of San Ysidro	153
3. Documents of Exception. The Forma 13 and Crossing Cards in a Local Landscape of Movement.....	157
4. Issues of Sovereignty: Illegal Crossings and the Imperative of Territorial Control	161

5. Territoriality beyond Borders and the Enforcement of Boundaries.....	164
5.1 The Closedown. NAFTA, Operation Gatekeeper and the Selective Border.....	165
5.2 The Laser Visa. Identifying and Disciplining Borderlanders	174
5.3 Smart Borders and the Partnership of Technology and Discourse on Post 9/11.....	190
5.4 Architectures of Difference: Hybrid, Foreign, Local Identities, and the Boundaries between Consumers and Laborers	198
5.5 Different Modalities of Movement: Waiting in Line and the SENTRI Lane.....	205
5.5.1 Queues at the Border and the Changing Relationship between Time and Distance	206
5.5.2 The Privilege of Movement: The Senti Lane and the Purification of Citizenship	209
6. Conclusion	218
Chapter 4. National and Transnational Connectivities: Spaces and Practices of Consumption in the San Diego-Tijuana Border.....	222
1. Introduction.....	222
2. The Stage of Multilayered Intersections: Violence, Frivolity and Transgression in La Línea.....	224
3. Shopping Distinction: The Monetary Weight of the Invisible Consume	233
4. Shopping Malls and Shopping at the Border: Plaza Mundo Divertido and the Las Americas Mall	242
5. Mediated Globalization, Transnational Stores and National Supermarkets.	250
5.1 Shopping for a Washing Machine: The Two Sides of COSTCO	252
5.2 Shop here, Shop there: Walmart Stores in the Binational “Metropolis”	259
5.3 You Are What You Shop and Where You Shop: Supermarket Distinction at the Border.....	264
6. Mesoamerican Free Trade: Bargains and Leftovers in the Neighborhood Sobreruedas (Open Air Markets) and Swap Meets.....	268
7. The Business of Shopping: Small Businesses, Segundas, Garage Sales and the Universe of Waste	276
8. Conclusion	282
Chapter 5. Virtual and Physical Borders: Mediascapes, Movement and Space in Tijuana’s Map of Consumption.....	288
1. Introduction.....	288

2. The Melting Pot in Tijuana’s Consumer’s Landscape: Virtual and Physical Checkpoints.....	290
3. Virtual Globalization: Mediascapes and Cross-border Advertising	299
3.1 Global Waves, Local Audiences: Cross-border Television and Radio.....	300
3.2 The border in the Street: The Language of Billboards and Ads	306
3.3 The Geography of Marketing Discrimination: Coupon Distribution and Segmented Populations	313
4. Borders and Boundaries in Tijuana’s Landscape of Inequality. Bodies that Move, Bodies that Don’t.....	320
5. Distributing Discrimination. Urban Growth, Gated Communities and the Housing Boom in Tijuana	333
6. Skirting the Material Divide: Social Networks, P.O. Boxes and the Technological Bypass	342
7. Conclusion	352
Conclusions	357
Figures	373
Maps	377
References	384

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Population in Tijuana since 1900	58
Table 2. Mexican Visitor Spending in San Diego County (1965-1974)	100
Table 3. Survey of Estimated Mexican Citizen Taxable Retail Purchases at San Diego Regional Shopping Centers (1977).....	100
Table 4. Income Distribution in Mexico and Tijuana in 1970 (Mexican Pesos)	101
Table 5. GDP in Baja California, by Sector (1950-1980) (Percentages)	101
Table 6. Percentage of Tijuana Residents Who Bought Specific Products in San Ysidro Stores. (1979).....	150
Table 7. General Information about the San Ysidro Port of Entry.....	286
Table 8. Estimated Percentage of Sales to Baja California Shoppers	286
Table 9. Retail sales of San Ysidro Businesses (millions of dollars).....	287
Table 10. Retail Sales and Income of Select Border Cities.....	287
Table 11. Importance of Baja California Shoppers during Winter Holiday Season 2002 (%)	287
Table 12. Population with a Visa in Baja California, According to Level of Income	355
Table 13. Media through which Tijuana Consumers Learn about Products Sold in the United States	355
Table 14. Border Crossing Statistics San Ysidro and Otay Ports of Entry (1997-2007).....	356

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Marketing Campaign for a Mexican Milk Brand: “I am from here and so Leche Lala”	373
Figure 2. Persuasion Campaign to Buy Toys on the Mexican Side: “Find the Difference: It is cheaper to buy toys in Mexico”	373
Figure 3. Products Sold in Open Air Market Stand.....	374
Figure 4. Marketing Middle Class Housing: “I am so pretty that I live in Urbiquinta Versailles. And where do you live?”	374
Figure 5. New Housing Developments in Tijuana	375
Figure 6. Neighborhood around Macroplaza.....	375
Figure 7. Finding the Yuppie Niche: “Espacio 5: A space for those of us on the top”	376

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1. Shopping Areas in San Diego - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	377
Map 2. Tijuana-San Diego Border Zones - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	377
Map 3. Lines of Cars as they Cross the Border. - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	378
Map 4. Costco, Home Depot, Mundo Divertido and Walmart in Tijuana -	379
<i>Source: www.google.com</i>	
Map 5. Walmart Chula Vista - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	380
Map 6. Boulevard 2000 that Connects Tijuana with Rosarito and Ensenada -	
<i>Source: www.google.com</i>	381
Map 7. Tijuana's Most Affluent Neighborhoods - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	382
Map 8. Plaza Bonita - <i>Source: www.google.com</i>	383

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Presentations

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- *May 2007,* San Francisco, Ca, **International Communication Association/ BINACOM,** Presentation entitled: “How do we see our neighbors from the North. A note about the representation of San Diego in Tijuana’s newspapers”.
- *September, 2005,* Madrid, Spain, **VII Spanish Conference of Political Science and Public Administration (AECPA).** Presentation entitled: “Immigration Press Coverage in México and the United States”.

- *September, 2005*, Puebla, Mexico, **Universidad de las Américas**. Presentation entitled: “Images and paradoxes of the U.S.-Mexico border”.
- *May 2005*, New York, **International Communication Association (ICA)**. Presentation entitled: “Citizenship, State and Nation: The Impact of Public Education Reform on Poor Communities in Tijuana, Mexico”.
- *June 2005*, Tijuana, México, **Universidad Iberoamericana**. Presentation Entitled: “Visions and Functions of the U.S.-Mexico border”.
- *February 2003*, San Diego, California, **UCSD Civic Collaborative**. San Diego Briefing. With Jorge Riquelme, presentation entitled: “Public Schools and the Empowerment of Poor Communities in the U.S. México Border”
- *February 2003*, Los Angeles, California, **University of California Los Angeles**. Comparativist’s Day. Presentation entitled: “Immigration and Immigrants in the United States and Mexico: Public Awareness and Public Policy”.
- *February 1998*, Tucson, Arizona, University of Arizona, **Research Center of Mexican-American Studies**. Presentation entitled: “The Latino Community and NAFTA”.

Publications

2006, ¿Cómo vemos a nuestros vecinos del norte? Apuntes sobre la representación de San Diego en la prensa de Tijuana (How do we see our neighbors from the north? A note about the representation of San Diego in Tijuana’s press) in *Comunicación y Sociedad*, Guadalajara, Mexico.

2005, “Las paradojas del caos: fracturas y funciones en la frontera de México y Estados Unidos” (The paradoxes of chaos: Fractures and Fusion at the U.S.-Mexico Border), *La Aventura de la Historia*, Madrid, Spain.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Enforcing Boundaries:

Globalization, State Power and the Geography of Cross-border Consumption in

Tijuana, Mexico

by

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In her dissertation Magalí Murià studies how policies of territorial control at the border have affected everyday life in Tijuana, reorganizing practices of consumption. She argues that regarding consumption, this border city has undergone a process of infrastructural and cultural integration with Mexico, as well as a physical detachment from the binational region in which it is immersed. Paradoxically, this process was accentuated by NAFTA, since the intensified cross-border flow of goods

came accompanied by restrictions to the movement of people, placing border populations at a crossroads between opposing forces of openness and closure.

Based on an ethnography combined with historical research, this dissertation addresses how public policy in the region has reshaped local markets. It also shows how Tijuana residents connect, through the goods they buy and the places where they consume, to Mexico and the United States. By examining patterns of consumption, it exposes some of the systems of difference and exclusion that nation states have introduced and enforced. She also explains how physical barriers that restrict cross-border mobility rearrange identities and boundaries both between north and south, and within border cities. This has reorganized social relations in Tijuana, and changed how Tijuana residents relate to the space where they live. This work contributes to the debate about the role of nation states and borders in the global economy, from the perspective of Tijuana residents, who have seen their everyday life increasingly conditioned by manifestations of state power and a more impenetrable border.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Welcome to Tijuana: Of Legends and Stereotypes, Borders and Boundaries**

*“Tijuana es un parque industrial en las afueras de Mineapolis.
Tijuana es una colonia de Tokio. Tijuana es un mercado Taiwanés”.*
Richard Rodríguez

“Y Cómo era Tijuana antes?”¹ I asked a lady who had lived in the city for over sixty years. “Pues muy bonito!” She said. “Muy, muy, muy bonito!”² ... She owned with her husband an old photographic studio, where I took my toddler to get school pictures. On the dark walls hung photos of the old Tijuana, images of the local glories, the old casino, the first curios shop, the public middle school that is now a modest cultural center. Early pictures of Rita Cansino, later Rita Hayworth, who posed along with other radiant faces, young ladies beautifully dressed in ballroom attires, Rotary Club queens, small kids dressed as revolutionaries, weddings and first communions, well known families, people that “everybody knows, *aquí en Tijuana*”³ ... I kept on going to the shop, accumulating small pictures of my son that I no longer needed, just to be able to breathe the air in that little room, where this elderly couple had set up a spatial memory of a city that was no longer visible in the street. And they are not the only ones. Like them, many old residents treasure memories of a small town where “everybody knew each other, everybody helped each other”, a community where people left their doors open, with money for the milkman stacked next to the empty glass containers in the front patio.

¹ So how was Tijuana before?

² Very nice....very, very, very nice!!

³ Here in Tijuana.

I must confess this came as a surprise to me. Before I lived in the city, I shared many of the assumptions that usually dominate the image of the border at the two countries' capitals (Washington and Mexico City): stereotypes and images of Tijuana as violent, dusty and ugly, a mix that combined the lawlessness of the wild west, the remoteness of the immense desert, and the pollution of a non-place that is “not here, not there”. I am in fact a product of post-revolutionary Mexico's education system, which establishes defined categories of what it is to be “Mexican” and what is not. This is a purist paradigm that revolves around the narrative of the *Mexica* culture right at the center of our national *ethos*, as well as in our mental –and geographical- map (See García Canclini, 1992.) Tijuana simply does not fit in this template. So when foreigners expressed their wish to visit the city, I always repeated what I heard from so many other *chilangos*⁴: “Just remember, Tijuana is *not* Mexico”.

I arrived in Tijuana in the summer of 2004. I was expecting to move to a territory that was “not Mexico”, hoping I could write a dissertation about one of the many signs of hybridity that illustrate Tijuana's condition of transnationality, which has turned the city into an icon of globalization. However, as I established myself and started interacting with people in the street, the supermarket, my neighborhood and my workplace, I observed that in Tijuana's everyday life, “Mexico” was more present than I ever imagined, and as I quickly learned from people of all walks of life, Tijuana is now more connected to Mexico than it was before. It did “feel” more connected to Mexico. So I dedicated myself to research this connection. I discovered that indeed, Tijuana *is* Mexico, it always has been. Its history is also the history of the Mexican

⁴ Chilangos is a term used in Mexico to call people from Mexico city.

State, as it went through a process of integration to the Mexican motherland that has accompanied Mexico's own nation-building. This history is worth knowing, at a moment where "global communication, especially media dissemination, has become so pervasive and so persuasive that many now postulate the formation of either a global monoculture or a global ecumene" (Hannertz in Mitchell, 2003, p.83).

Tijuana-born writer Federico Campbell once remarked that the image Americans have of Tijuana is not the same as the one Tijuana has of itself. Indeed, the entire world views Tijuana differently from its residents, stripping Tijuana residents of the right to represent themselves, to make their own image. We have fallen into a trap, into what Edward Said calls an "imaginative geography" (See Said, 1994, p.49), and constructed a place that suits our pre-established paradigms, our logic of power. This is what has prompted local scholars and artists to divide Tijuana in two: The "Tijuana of tourism" and the "Tijuana of Tijuanaans" (Crosby *et.al.*, 2000 p.18). The Tijuana of Tijuanaans is indeed a city deeply concerned about its own history. It is not a coincidence that the Tijuana Historical Society owns an impressive building, donated by a local businessman, with an auditorium, a photographic archive and several galleries that now and then show exhibits of local artists. Controversies about how and when the city was founded are common themes among old residents, debates that are often reflected in local newspapers, public seminars and lectures. For a city with such a short history (it was only founded in 1889) the concern to preserve its historical memory is remarkable, particularly when it comes to asserting the city's "Mexicanness". Episodes of local history and local myths are something old Tijuanaans from all walks of life like to share. They remember the filibuster intervention of 1911,

the 1943 standoff between citizens of Tijuana and the U.S. army, and the mysterious murder of Olga Camacho by the legendary Juan Soldado. From rapist and murderer he became in the city's memory a martyr and a saint (See Vanderwood, 2004). And for those who arrived from somewhere else, it does not matter if it was fifty years or two months ago, there is the old saying that, no matter what your initial intentions were at the moment of your arrival, when you drink water from the dam⁵, you stay in Tijuana forever.

This local vision of Tijuana collides with the very visible stories of illegal migration and labor exploitation, environmental degradation, smuggling and drug violence that inevitably dominate border scholarship. These issues reinforce what *Tijuanenses* call the city's "black legend", contributing to the way we essentialize, dehumanize and categorize this city, as well as the southern side of the border as a whole. Ultimately, this view simplifies the shape and content of border studies. In his seminal book about Tijuana's dark image entitled *Tijuana la Horrible*, Humberto Félix Berumen dissects the discourses around this vilified city. By and large, he argues the "black legend" was formed during the 1920s, when Tijuana became the site of cantinas, brothels and casinos catering to Americans escaping prohibition. Later in history, Tijuana's image as a symbol of sin and illegality became reinforced in the mass media, particularly Hollywood, and was also nourished by new elements (drugs and smuggling) that have configured a negative and stigmatized "social identity" (Félix Berumen, 2003, pp.370-374). In the end, Tijuana has been turned into a

⁵ The Abelardo Rodriguez Dam, built during the 1930s. People still remember when they used to go to the dam on Sundays, to picnic, boat and fish.

“Foucauldian *heteropia*”, says Félix Berumen, “a counter place” that has historically marked a moral limit between the north and south of the border (Félix Berumen, 2003, p. 114) and an expression of “malign otherness” (Félix Berumen, 2003, 118.)

The black legend fits perfectly, by the way, into Washington’s main agenda, adding to the lack of agency borderlanders have over their own image, their powerlessness to face policies that are dictated miles away from the place where they live. According to border scholar Tony Payán:

Unfortunately, border residents have little control over the image and reputation of their homeland. They do not even control their cross-border life. They certainly do not make or even influence the policies and rules that structure their cross-border interaction. Those policies are made in the capitals, like Mexico City and, more specifically, in Washington DC, thousands of miles away from the border itself. Through border policy, the lives of millions of people who reside in the borderlands are strongly contoured by policies from far away (Payan, 2006, p.15).

This dissertation engages with the everyday life of Tijuana residents. In many ways, it was guided by the motivation to document how those living south of the U.S.-Mexico border have experienced such policies, and hopes to give them a voice to talk about themselves and their city. In this effort, this work deconstructs yet another element of the “black legend”, which if more subtle than the others, has become an obstacle to achieving a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border: the categorization of Tijuana exclusively as a city of producers, or laborers, rather than a city of consumers, or shoppers, as I agree with Elana Zilberg when she reminds us that producers are simultaneously consumers, be in the North or the South (Zilberg, 2002, p.231). Indeed, in the asymmetric relation between Mexico and the United States, the so called “colossus of the north” has a lot to say in the issues

that are emphasized, and those that are ignored. For instance, the fact that during the Christmas of 2007 Tijuana residents spent approximately 86 million dollars in San Diego's stores, and that this figure reached 6 billion dollars in 2008, is a topic that only a small number of marketers on the northern side of the border want to know. Why? Because it breaks with fixed assumptions of the south as the spatial "other" to the north, the first world being increasingly seen as a "place of consumption" and the third world as a "place of labor". Acknowledging the importance of Mexican consumers in San Diego's local economy would also break with pre-conceived assumptions that when people from the first world travel, it is as tourists and shoppers, while those from the third world do so as workers and illegal immigrants. This matters because "images and stereotypes, and the imaginary geography of places and spaces, are shown to have social impacts" (Shields, 1991, p.48). They condition the types of borders we draw on the map and also the way we think of the boundaries that divide peoples within those borders.

My dissertation deals with the border that was defined in 1847 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. It also talks about the boundaries that have been produced and enforced since that time, starting an ongoing process of separation between the peoples of a region that was once whole. The concept of a border can be seen as a geographical fact. The notion we typically find in dictionaries emphasizes the territorial delimitation between two sovereign countries with different languages, cultures, and legal systems. Even in an aerial picture, it is not hard to follow visually this capricious serpent-line, if only because of the differences of land use, deforestation and water allocation (See Table 1).

However, we also know that borders are historically and culturally constructed. Here, it is worth noting that the limits between the United States and Mexico were not finally established until 1967, with the Treaty of Chamizal. Before that there was a long history of territorial disputes that dominated the first face-to-face encounters between the two countries as national entities. So as the United States and Mexico underwent their own processes of national formation, it is worth asking how have they managed to define who is “us” and “them”, where is “here” and where is “there” if, as the geo-political delimitation between the two was not completed until a few decades ago. This illustrates how difficult it is to talk about “the border” and why, in many ways, its definition remains very vague. Thus, it becomes relevant to define the borderlands, as those territories adjacent to the border. This is a region constantly exposed to the “conflict and contradiction, material and ideational” (Alvarez, 1995, p.448) of the simultaneous clash and blend between national communities as distinct as Mexico and the United States. The borderlands embody and materialize this vagueness, the difficulties in establishing clear lines to identify the peoples, and the spaces they occupy in opposition to each other. They are hybrid by definition. It is in this context that we understand why the governments of both countries have exerted their territorial power to establish and imprint clear divisions both in the land and the minds of those that inhabit the borderlands. In other words, they have engaged in an effort to “naturalize” the differences between both sides of the border and create “purified territories” (Paasi, 2003, p.466), where such distinctions are easy to discern. They have done so by enforcing the boundaries that divide them.

In the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, I talk about boundaries as institutions and symbols that establish and convey the meaning of territorial divisions and identities (Paasi, 2003, pp.76-80). They “simultaneously produce distinctions between social groups and are produced by them (...)They not only separate groups and social communities from each other, but also mediate contacts between them” (Paasi, 2003, p.80.) As institutions, they link the past, present and future together. They allow continuity for social interaction. As symbols, boundaries are mediums and instruments of social control, as well as mechanisms of communication and construction of meanings and identities. In fact, says Anssi Paasi, collective identity is not generated naturally, but it is socially constructed and produced by boundaries. This makes the links between boundaries, nationalism and identity particularly strong. And since identity –or the representation of identity- is achieved through the inscription of boundaries, the question of power is essential (Paasi, 2003, p.80). Boundaries are therefore expressions of power relations, as well as the manifestations of social practice and discourse (Paasi, 2003, pp.80-82).

In this dissertation, I analyze the role of the nation-state in the production of boundaries across and within borders in the Tijuana-San Diego region. I want to find out specifically how it is that, as Payán argues, government policy in Mexico City and Washington DC contours the lives of border residents (Payan, 2006, p.15). In the “Tijuana of Tijuans”, I focus on how the territorial power of the State has affected everyday life. I am also interested in how everyday life and social relations at the border have historically coexisted with processes of nation building in both the United States and Mexico, and adapts to them. As I will discuss in detail below, I argue in my

dissertation that a good way to research them in concrete and grounded terms is to study everyday practices of consumption. In the case of a city that has been represented as a site of labor instead of consumption, I will narrow my discussion to practices of consumption, which will also allow me to deconstruct some of the premises of the “black legend”. I will explain later that consumption plays a significant role in constructing and representing identity. It erases and reinforces differences between communities both across and within borders. Concretely, I approach practices and cultures of consumption from the perspective of space. I will claim that the impact of State power in people’s everyday lives is very visible when we see it in relation to space, territory and the social relations revolving around them. Accordingly, I craft, with a historical perspective, a geography of consumption in Tijuana, and use it as a way to analyze the relation between State power and boundaries across and within the Tijuana-San Diego border. With this I contribute to ongoing debates in the social sciences regarding the role of States and borders in globalization. I also plan to expand the knowledge we have about the relationship between nation-states and their borders, in a context where the world seems to be getting smaller and yet more divided.

2. Global and Local Scopes: States and Borders in the De-Territorialization Debate

In its simplest sense, globalization refers to the widening, deepening, and speeding up of global interconnectedness (Held and McGrew, 2000, p.54). It comes with unprecedented flows of capital, goods and ideas across the world, posing new questions and problems to our governing notions of States, borders, and sovereignty

(See Paasi, 2003, p. 462). In its early stages, globalization was believed to introduce a paradigmatic change that would challenge the state-centered approach in the social sciences. States suddenly felt like a thing of the past, regarded as obsolete institutions that would simply collapse or at least see their importance significantly diminished in the light of transnational flows of goods, people and information (See for instance Ohmae, 1990). Borders were no longer viewed as fixed and hard features of international life but as contingent and porous (Migdal, 2004, p.3), as zones of mixing, blending, and blurring (Paasi, 2003, p.462). These trends were nurtured by the proliferation of economic blocs in Europe, Southeast Asia and, of utmost relevance in this dissertation, the approval, in 1994, of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Most of the emphasis turned to what transcends such borders, which favored the proliferation of scholarly works on flows (See for instance Featherstone, 1987), transnationalism (See for instance Olwig, 2003, Portes *et.al.*, 1999, and Smith and Guarnizo, 1999) and hybridity and displacement (See for instance Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Social structure was perceived to become “transnationalized” (Robinson, 1998, p.561), prompting a paradigmatic shift in the focus of social inquiry from the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis to the global system as a more appropriate one (Robinson, 1998, p.561). Also, some scholars even began talking about a “post-national age” (Kearny, 1998, p.121), a shift from the Wesphalian notion of territorial absolutism (Newman, 2000 p.20). Academic texts started incorporating subjects that transcended the institutional limits of the State and its geographical boundaries. New concepts, new words, new lingo: “Many ‘post’, ‘trans’ ‘supra’ ‘inter’ ‘meta’ (See Wilson and Donnan, 1999, p.9) aimed to describe the stretching of social,

political, and economic activities across frontiers. These terminologies also accounted for the ways in which events, decisions, and activities in one region of the world affected individuals and communities in other distant places (Held and McGrew, 2000, p.54).

The myth of retreat, or the belief that the nation-state is in decline, has since then been seriously debated (See for instance Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p.1 and Newman, 2000, p.17, Sorensen, 2004). Some authors argue that there is an insistent tension between the project of the modern nation-state and its ideological control over circulation of both its citizens and their capital in diaspora (Mitchell, 2003, p.29). Others argue that globalization should not be seen in contradiction with other processes (such as nationalism) but in coexistence (Held and McGrew, 2000, p.55) and that the State has accommodated to such processes. Yet, there seems to be consensus on the fact that rather than declining, States and borders are changing their role, indeed coexisting with other transnational institutions. We cannot deny there have been tensions between post cold-war State sovereignty and global forces (Sorensen, 2004, p.171). However, it is clear that States are adapting and “rearranging their practical functioning and meaning in a globalizing and informationalising capitalist condition” (Tuathail, 2000, p.143). Overall, the State sustains “its historically dominant role as an arbiter of control, violence, order and organization for those whose identities are being transformed by world forces” (Hastings and Donnan, 1999, p.2).

States and boundaries are in constant flux. In the past decade, it has become a major challenge for scholars from all disciplines to figure out the specific ways in

which such accommodation process is occurring, and how it is changing the premises that supported traditional State-centered theories. This was one of the main motivations I had when I embarked in this dissertation. In the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, I sought to contribute to this debate from the perspective of the Tijuana-San Diego border. How, concretely, is the role and meaning of the State and its borders changing in the context of globalization? How are these changes affecting the lives of border residents? An important goal in this dissertation has been to find adequate tools to answer these questions. I am particularly concerned with State-society relations, and how the State makes itself present in the lives of border communities, since borders are considered to be “spatial and temporal records of relationships between local communities and the State” (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p.3).

Key in this discussion is the idea of de-territorialization, a scenario where money, enterprises and people would cross borders and circulate freely (See for instance Appadurai, 1990, p.303), where the free flow of capital and information would reconfigure the relationship between time and space. Discourses about de-territorialisation revolved around “a generalized dismantling of the complex of geography, power and identity that supposedly defined and delimited everyday life (...)” (Tuathail, 2000, p.140). National territories would open space for virtual spaces (Newman 2000, p.21), breaking up the link between identity and citizenship (Newman, 1998, p.28) as well as producing a disjuncture between identities and territory.

Critics of these views argue that processes of de-territorialization are accompanied by simultaneous processes of re-territorialization (See for instance, Newman, 1998, p. 28). Tuathail, for instance, pointed out that:

The human practices organizing borders, States and territories are co-evolving with socio-technical networks and informationalised capitalist relations of production and consumption. It is not simply that there is no de-territorialisation without re-territorialisation, but that both are parts of ongoing generalized processes of territorialisation (Tuathail, 2000, p.143).

This happens in unequal ways. Newman, for example, argues that simultaneous processes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization create geographic differentiation of boundaries, with greater permeability in some places, and more fixed lines of separation in others (Newman, 1998, p.31). Such processes are creating a world political map that is paradoxically more integrated and connected, yet also more divided and dislocated. Here, most States have successfully connected to processes of capital transnationalism, leaving capital to flow freely, while maintaining its repressive functions and retaining bodies anchored in place (See Sadowski Smith, 2002, p.3, Bauman, 1998, and Sassen, 1998). This is consistent with what some scholars have found at the U.S.-Mexico border, where the approval of NAFTA marked what Peter Andreas called the “simultaneous creation of a barricaded border and a borderless economy (Andreas, 2000, p.x). While goods and capital flow freely across the map, people face increasing restrictions to cross border movement and therefore, says Jason Ackleson, “when we talk about deterritorialization, we must account for the freeing of space for capital and communication, but not –at this stage- identity and people” (Ackleson, 2000, p.157).

Because of the geographical proximity between Mexico and the United States, these developments have placed the borderlands at the crossroads between opposing forces of openness and closure. The pressures of national governmental power and global free trade translate into tightened controls for people and free passage of goods, vividly impacting the everyday life of its residents. Furthermore, Tijuana's experience shows how people living at border regions are facing, perhaps more intensely than in other places, the constant interference of State authority in daily activities such as going to school, work, and shopping. This complicates discourses of globalization as a process that erases borders, and signals the paradoxical rise of nationalism that accompanies the increase of transnational flows. Tijuana is therefore an interesting case in point to illustrate these contradictions. Its study provides useful insights to address the discussion about the State's relationship to its borders as well as the often-confusing interplay of globalization and State building.

3. Crossing and Enforcing Boundaries: Text and Matter Across the North-South Divide

At the U.S.-Mexico border, the premises of de-territorialization seems to find a fertile field. The long history of binational interaction between communities from both sides provides a "laboratory of post-modernity" (See García Canclini, 1992) a window for what a borderless world could become. Scholarly and journalistic circles have welcomed the idea of the "third nation", an area that was neither American nor Mexican, where "irrespective of territorial location, national holidays of both nations are celebrated" (Duarte, 2002, p.145). Post-structuralist scholars have emphasized the

diffusion of old binaries, the merging of notions like “us” and “them”, “here” and “there”, a region that naturally deconstructed territorially bound schemes of citizenship, identity and belonging (See for instance, Anzaldúa, 1999, 2001, Duarte, 2001, Gómez Peña, 1993, Garcia Canclini 2005, 1992). In other words: “Hybridity, diaspora, simulacra, displacement, hyperreality, deterritorialization, reterritorialization and fragmentation” have been seen as “phenomena that transect the borderlands and create the State for a postmodern experience” (Duarte, 2002, p.149). These works “claim the border as a paradigm of crossing, circulation, material mixing and resistance” (Vila, 2003, p.20). They focus on text. They construct the border as a metaphor, a narrative that “includes cultural, social, political and identity processes of boundary crossing not necessarily grounded on the geopolitical space” (Duarte, 2001, p.140). Space here is therefore conceptualized as hyperspace, an intersection of “multiple subjectivities” (Anzaldúa) that is “experienced differentially by specific actors depending on their social location” (Duarte, 2002, p.152). They rely, as Robert Alvarez puts it, on “literary analysis to understand behavior” (Alvarez, 1995, p.461).

In his words:

These voices broke down the boundaries of the geopolitical border and illustrated the multidimensional character of life on the borderlands; nurtured in a history of conflict through the Spanish, Mexican, American, and, throughout, native stages. Through bilingual, bicultural, and binational voices (...) Borders took a new meaning” (Alvarez, 1995, p.461).

Critics to this approach point out that seeing the border as a narrative may lead us disregard material issues of power at the border. Pablo Vila, for instance, who conducted extensive ethnographic research in the region of El Paso-Juárez, concluded

that: “To claim that any identity on the border is already ‘in between’, that is that there are no borders among identities to be crossed and that ‘border identities are always open to outside cultures’, is to ignore power relations” (Vila, 2003, p.315). As I will discuss in this dissertation, the circulation and crossing that are celebrated by post-modern authors are not open to everybody. I thus coincide with Pablo Vila that the border crosser or hybrid is positioned in a situation of privilege (Vila, 2003, p. 322) and that we must take further steps in understanding how such privileges are formed, materialized and established. Because most of my research was conducted on the southern side of the border, I had plenty of opportunities to confirm that, as Vila points out:

For scholars doing border studies on the Mexican side of the line, it is difficult to see the border as a mere metaphor, as the epitomized possibility of crossings, hybrids and the like. For those who live on the Mexican side, the border studies metaphor of borderlands is incarnated in long and unpleasant hours of waiting at the international bridges, in tedious immigration proceedings, in the continual threat of harassment from Customs and Border Patrol Workers, in the risk of (possibly deadly) encounters with American soldiers patrolling the border (...) (Vila, 2003, p.312).

Just experiencing the day to day life of a two and a half year stay in Tijuana made me confirm Vila’s point that “the border is defined by policy rather than poets” (Vila, 2003, p.323). Furthermore, I believe that the role of the State has been underestimated by most of post-modern scholarship, by separating the border from the material conditions in which borderlanders conduct their everyday life. I agree with Hasting and Donnan when they state that “local experience of the State and resistance to it cannot be limited to the imaginative experience of representations: attention must

be paid to the very material consequences of the actions of States for local populations” (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.3). For these reasons, during the writing process of this dissertation, I constantly reminded myself that we cannot separate the geopolitical from the metaphorical, the symbolic from the material.

In general, border scholars concur on an existing tension between State interest and that of those living in the borderlands. There is, indeed, a “lack of fit” between border culture and State sovereignty (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.12), that makes “local people on both sides of the border see their unified social system threatened by federal agencies, whose task is to incorporate the region to the national economy, culture and society” (Duarte, 2002, p.147). Some authors think that the national States, although uncontrollable for the locals, lack the power to contain the cultural system (Vélez Ibanez, 1996). Others argue that if it is true that borders are zones where values and political power are renegotiated, we must not forget they are also areas “where States establish the rules for all this to occur” (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.122). It is therefore of utmost importance “to return to a localized, particularistic and territorially focused notion of borders” (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.2).

Here, I must clarify that when I talk about the nation-state and State power at the border, I normally refer to both the United States and Mexico. Consistent with the balance of forces in the international arena, the United States exerts its power in a more visible, decisive and overwhelming way. Many scholars consider that “the U.S. government is the primary agent determining the face of the border, by dictating how open or closed it should be and what the rules governing trans-boundary activity should be” (Payán, 2006, p.5). Indeed, it is possible to observe that “residents on both

sides of the physical boundary are generally left to adjust, adapt, and react to Washington's decisions. They do so by accommodating their lives and routines as best they can do to the newest policy whims that come from Capitol Hill" (Payan, 2006, p.5). If I acknowledge this, I also state, in this dissertation, that the Mexican government has historically found different ways in making itself present in the everyday lives of borderlanders, particularly during the early stages of post-revolutionary Mexico's nation building process. For reasons that I explain in my second and third chapters, both governments have changed their policies and priorities over time.

With these debates in mind this dissertation tells the story of how the border imposes itself over the borderlands, how State power turns locals into nationals, hybrids into citizens, and *fronterizos* into *bajacalifornianos*. This made me direct my attention to ethnography, keeping in mind that "the anthropological study on the everyday lives of border communities is simultaneously the study of the daily life of the State, whose agents there must take an active role in the implementation of policy and the intrusion of the State's structures into its people's lives" (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p.4). I focus my attention on processes of national integration. While Mexican globalization scholars emphasize what they call the "borderization" of Mexico (See for instance Barrera, 1996) I concentrate my efforts on explaining what I consider to be the "Mexicanization of the border". In order to support this view I will describe, from a historical perspective, how State building shapes and manifests itself at the U.S.-Mexico border. Also, I will use ethnography and textual analysis to explore some of the material and symbolical avenues through which the State exerts its power over

the everyday lives of border communities. I believe that focusing on daily activities is important because while “not overtly political, they are relevant to the State which endeavors to control them” (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p 21). In Hasting and Donnan’s words:

Smuggling, migration, cross-border shopping and other kinds of transborder movement occurring within or outside the limits of the law may challenge and even undermine State efforts to define the identities of those who live at the border (...) Such activities certainly offer an opportunity for exploring the strength or fragility with which State structures impose their definitions and exert their influence for it is in the ease or difficulty with which exit and entry are exercised that State regulations are frequently made more apparent (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p21).

Along these lines, “a focus on border cultures allows us to engage issues of nation and State by generating data on how these are routinely lived and experienced by ordinary people” (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.13). The history of consumption cultures and practices in Tijuana provide with a good example of the “mexicanization” process that I have observed in Tijuana, connecting it to Mexico’s infrastructural network and imaginary community. As I will explain in more detail below, I have found in consumer and material cultures an important venue to reflect how such connections occur. I have also found in consumption a very useful tool to approach both text and matter in the study of the border, to bridge the material and the symbolic, and to explain the dynamic between the two. Finally, studying consumption at the border is a useful mechanism to figure out how the situation of privilege that Vila talks about when he criticizes the post-structuralist approach (Vila, 2003, p.322) is materialized and established.

4. “El Consumo es Bueno Para Pensar”: Thinking Consumption in the U.S.-Mexico Border.

Since the consumer revolution of the 1950s, consumption has become an inherent part of everyday life, a characteristic of modern market society (See for instance Zukin 2005). My ethnographic research in Tijuana showed me that shopping for goods across the border is:

More than buying things which are not available on your own side of the border, not in the quantity or at the lower price for which they can be had across the borderline. Such goods may also add something to one’s social standing as signs or symbols of wealth, mobility, acumen, political connections, ambition or other social skills which might be associated with the possession of such products (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.117).

For these reasons, consumption is, as Néstor García Canclini points out “good for thinking”, for making sense of the world (See García Canclini, 1995, p.58). At the border, practices of consumption reflect social relations that configure themselves, in part, as a result of government policy. This is why there is a link between consumption and citizenship, as it manifests “belonging and control”: Belonging to the nation and control by its State (García Canclini, 1995, p.65). This author, in fact, considers the nation to be an “interpretative community of consumers” with traditional habits through which they relate to objects and information in a peculiar way (García Canclini, 1995, pp.65-66).

Moreover, consumption provides an ideal venue to bridge cultural and economic processes (Slater, 2003, p.148 and Anderson *et al*, 2003, p.149) making it possible to tangibly see how they impact and reflect each other. In their 1979 book *A World of Goods*, Mary Douglas’s added a “cultural value” to the structural Marxist

vision of commodities as mere pieces in the capitalist cycle, an approach that was later expanded by Arjun Appadurai elaborated more on this matter in his 1986 seminal piece *The Social Life of Things*. These works opened a stream of research that sought to unveil the “visible part of culture” inherent in material goods, that are here understood as an information system that conveys meaning. Individuals, they argue, use consumption to say something about themselves, their family, and their locality. For this reason, consumption plays an important role in the construction and representation of identity, as it invokes, mediates and reproduces “structures of meaning and practice through which social identities are formed, and through which social relations and institutions are maintained and changed overtime” (Slater, 2003, p.145).

At the same time, consuming can also be understood as part of a wider system of production, marketing and selling as well as a network of social interactions (Edwards, 2000, p.121). This brings me to discuss consumption as a vehicle of connectivity. Since the early days of consumption studies, scholars have agreed on the fact that consumption is a form of connectivity (See for instance Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p.10). However, it is not until relatively recently that they have further discussed this idea. Juliana Mansvelt for instance, dedicated a chapter of her book *Geographies of Consumption* to connections between producers and consumers, as commodities move across space (Mansvelt, 2005, pp.113-117). These works refer to what I call “material forms of connectivity” that link commodities to the conditions in which they are produced, distributed and sold.

In my dissertation, I borrowed Robert Foster's idea that the consumption of certain products bring shared frames of reference to a community that in turn can lead to the construction of a national narrative (Foster, 2002). The notion of shared frames of reference made sense for the case of a city like Tijuana where, for decades, consumption across the border so clearly reflected a sense of membership to a "foreign" community, and a unique *connection* to both the United States and Mexico. Foster's work helped me to think about connectivity in terms of *symbolic* links with shared frames of reference that ultimately relate individuals to communities of belonging (as in Migdal, 2004, p.4), whether they are global or local, and incorporate them to the nation as an imaginary community (Foster, 2002). This definition expands, I believe, the "material forms of connectivity" that I have mentioned, which strictly refer to the links between consumers and economic processes and circuits that link cities with the regional, national and global spheres (See for instance, Castells, 1997, p.14).

Thinking of connectivity brings us to consider the notion of networks. Traditionally, networks refer to "patterned interactions between independent agents, nodes of activity or sites of power" (Held and McGrew, 2000, p.55). They have also been defined as "webbed structures through which "goods, information, and capital and people flow in a multidirectional manner" (Mitchell, 2003, p.76). Authors like Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen have oriented their discussion of networks towards the study of cities, or what Sassen calls global cities, and the flows and infrastructures that connect them to the global economy (See Sassen, 1999). In her work, Sassen talks about cities like Tokyo, New York, and even Mexico City which are positioned at the

core of global financial activities. Compared to them, Tijuana could be considered a marginal place (Shields, 1991, p.48, See also Sassen, 1999, pp.182-183). However, Tijuana has shown unique patterns of connectivity with the other side of the border, the Mexican nation, and global markets, particularly eastern Asia, some of which have deep historical roots. This made me consider, in the context of Tijuana, a wider understanding of networks that, in the same logic as that of connectivity include systems of meaning that are based on shared narratives, by people who are members of similar communities of belonging. Accordingly, cities can be connected to cross-border networks, but also to border regions, to the nation as an imaginary community and, as I will explain later, to the State as an infrastructural network.

In the realm of consumption, the possibility to bridge the material and the symbolic has led to some academic controversy. Since Douglas and Isherwood first argued about the cultural meaning of commercial goods, post-structuralist authors have separated consumption from its economic context, studying it as a narrative, as expression of subjectivities (see Jackson *et.al*, 2000) and as instance of culture (See Cohen, 2003), particularly material culture (See McCracken, 1990 and Miller, 1998). Authors in this tradition also focus on consumption as an expression of identity (see Featherstone, 1987 and Davis, 2000), style (see Tomlinson, 1990), and empowerment, or what is called “consumer sovereignty” (see Fine and Leopold, 1993). Critics of this approach argue that consumption is not simply a matter of style, but of “money and economics, social practice and social division, political policies and political implication” (Edwards, 2000, p.3). Along these lines, “the shift away from the post-modern agenda involves a renewed concern with the relation between consumption

and persistent social structures of inequality and power” (Anderson *et al*, 2003, p.149). In response there is an “ethnographic turn”, which has taken not only as “a corrective to political economies that derive consumption from structural determinants, but also in response to semiotic and post-modern currents for whom consumption stems from readings of objects and spaces, without examination of actual and particular consumer and consumption practices” (Slater, 2003, p.148).

It is worth noting that post-structuralism did open avenues to think about consumption in terms of consumer cultures (See Jackson *et.al*. 2000), which is useful if we consider the term to involve dual focus:

Firstly on the cultural dimension of the economy, the symbolization and the use of material goods as ‘communicators’ not just utilities; and secondly, on the economy of cultural goods, the market principles of supply, demand, capital accumulation, competition, and monopolization which operate within the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities (Featherstone, 1987, p.57).

All these subjects do relate first to questions of inequality and power, and secondly of social and economic stratification (Edwards, 2000, p.3). Daniel Miller argues, for instance, that consumption stratification in fact reflects divisions already established by other factors. Further, other determinants of consumption patterns, such as cultural relations, may reinforce the consumption distinctions between classes but they may also moderate them (Miller, 1995, 139). In this context, consumption scholars have turned their attention to “the variety and inequity of individual group shopping experiences, in terms of financial and geographical access, according to class, occupation, sex, race or age, to mention only a few of the potential variations and sources of discrimination and inequity” (Edwards, 2000, p.118). In a consumer’s

society where the acquisition of consumer goods plays such a crucial role, “being without these things not by choice is exclusionary. It prevents people from participating in society in ways that are considered to be the norm and which are institutionalized as a normative, which is read and talked about as inequality” (Gregson, 2003, p. 51). Then, “Inequality within a capitalist consumer society comes to be regarded in terms of the presumed right of individuals to buy and consume particular things” (Gregson, 2003, p. 51).

For all these reasons, addressing consumption at the U.S.-Mexico border can become a powerful vehicle to study the issues that concern me in this dissertation. First, they inform on issues of citizenship and membership. Second, since consumption bridges economics and culture, its study helps resolve the conflict between matter and text that I made reference in the previous section. In this, I found it particularly useful to work around the notion of connectivity, understood as the links between consumers and economic structures as well as an imaginary community. The idea of networks expands on this idea, allowing us to follow Tijuana’s material and symbolic connections to the other side of the border, the State, and the global economy, in a context where two imaginary communities both clash and overlap in quite intricate ways. Third, studying consumption helps address issues of inequality and power at the U.S.-Mexico border, which helps ground approaches that celebrate integration in a de-contextualized fashion, and opens new avenues to figure out, concretely, the types of boundaries that divide the border population. Moreover, as today’s processes of globalization increase the circulation of goods across national boundaries, thereby integrating economies and bringing cultures together,

consumption is becoming a good tool to study local-global interactions. It informs us about how peoples in particular regions of the world experience economic and cultural trends, and how these trends affect their own local environments. In this, our previous discussion about the role of the State becomes particularly relevant, as well as the territorial aspects of State power that exert a strong influence in people's everyday lives. This is why it is important to narrow our focus on consumption to its relation with space.

5. The Territorial Aspects of Power: Nation-States and the Spatial Dimension of Consumption

Consumption is a practice that often responds to and reflects power relations (Jackson *et. al*, 2000, p.11). In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with State power and the effect of government policy in everyday life. At the U.S. Mexico border, the most visible manifestations of State power take place over the land, the landscape and the territory, which brings me to study the expression of power across space or what can also be called *territoriality*. According to geographer Robert Sack, we create territories when we control areas of space. We then understand territoriality as the geographical exercise of power (Sack 1992, p.19). Moreover, geographers seem to agree that territoriality is a notion that transcends territory itself, and permeates into people's behavior and social relations (Sack, 1992, p.19). It is usually thought of as "the attempt to affect, influence, and control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area" (Sack, 1992, p.92). Sack, in fact, considers it to be the most fundamental concept of space in the realm of social relations (Sack, 1992, p.19). Along the same lines, Robert Delaney argues that

territoriality is an aspect of how individuals, as embodied beings, organize themselves with respect to the social and material world, how human associations and institutions organize themselves in space (Delaney, 2005, p. 10-16).

Delaney extends the social reach of territorial power beyond its physical and institutional dimensions, into the symbolic realm. He argues that it is involved in the “creation, circulation and interpretation of meaning”, which in turn reflects social power (Delaney, 2005, p.16). In this connection between space, power, and meaning, territoriality makes reference to specifically legal texts that connect spaces to the nation-state, which is a particular institutional territorial form of power (Delaney, 2005, p.30). Thus, territoriality can be seen as the “territorial aspect of nation building” (Delaney, 2005, p.15). It also becomes one of the first conditions of the States’ existence and the *sine qua non* of its borders (Hasting and Donnan, 1999, p.9). In this context, State territoriality can be understood as the exercise of the nation-state’s power over a given territory. In this dissertation, I study the ways in which State territoriality conditions people’s mobility across space when they consume, the social relations they construct in the process, and the meanings this creates and conveys. In other words, I am mostly concerned about how territoriality affects the ways in which Tijuana residents relate to space. By doing this, I seek to find changes in social relations, expressed in patterns of connectivity and national membership that occur as a result of government policies of territorial integration.

But, how can we discern the impact of State territorial power in the consumption habits of Tijuana residents? Most of the consumption literature that I reviewed at the beginning of my research tends to focus on consumers or the goods

they consume. At first this was my primary concern, mostly regarding the material cultures that, during most of the XX century, distinguished Tijuana from the rest of Mexico. In my first chapter I explain that for decades, most of the goods that *Tijuanenses* consumed came from across the border. In a context of economic nationalism, this made them partake of frames of reference that were more common in the United States than in Mexico. However, with globalization, the meaning of goods changed, they became de-territorialized, and many of them are now produced and distributed at a global scale. Facilitated by NAFTA, this has translated into a more intense flow of foreign products into the Mexican market. In Tijuana, transnational chains like COSCO, Walmart and Home Depot make many of these goods available without having to cross the border to obtain them, which is also the case for local supermarkets and even neighborhood stores. This has changed the meanings associated with these commodities. As I will explain in my third chapter, restrictions to cross-border movement have increased overtime. This has changed the meaning of shopping in San Diego in ways that were not so prevalent in the past. For this reason I incorporated, in chapters 4 and 5, the component of space and place to the initial analysis of goods and their meaning. But what do we understand as space and how do we use it in this dissertation? How is space different from place and how do they relate to consumption? Some basic definitions are here needed.

In this dissertation, I share the belief that, more than simply areas on maps, spaces are “bundles of social relations” (Massey in Mansvelt, 2005, p.56). As such they create meaning, and people construct meaning through them. Space, says Robert Sack, “can be a set of places, and place can be a location in space” (Sack, 1992, p.2).

In de Certeau, a place (*lieu*) is “the order (...) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence”, an “instantaneous configuration of positions” (de Certeau, 1984, p.117). Space (*espace*) exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocity and time variables. It is actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs, he says, “as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. In this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken (...) In short, space is a practiced place” (De Certeau, 1984, p.117).

Spaces have both material and symbolic power. Manuel Castells has his own way of talking about this when he distinguishes between the space of flows and the space of places: “While the flow space is globally integrated, the place space is locally fragmented” (Castells, 1977, p.44). “Flow space” refers to media and text, “place space” to materiality and territory. In order to figure out the meanings of place and space it is useful to pay attention to landscape, which is considered to be “the visible quality of space” (Sack, 1992, p. 2). Landscape represents “a microcosms of social relations” (Zukin, 1991, p.18) and is therefore seen as an apprehension of spatial surfaces. They structure the act of seeing the land, which is incarnated in particular “scapes”, or different ways of sensing the land (Anderson *et.al.*, 2003, p.6). In this dissertation, I focus my attention to landscapes of consumption, or “consumptionscapes” in Tijuana and San Diego.

Not surprisingly, space and place are strongly connected to the construction of identity as they condition the way we conduct our everyday life. In this, the notion of

“nested identities”, that links national identity to territory, was particularly useful to me (Herb and Kaplan, 1999, p.2). Nationalism politicizes space and creates geographically bounded homelands within which national groups claim sovereignty. Territory then entails a nationalistic drawing of the landscape (Paasi, 1996, p.23,) it creates a collective consciousness by reinventing itself as a homeland (Herb and Kaplan, p.22 and Knight, 1999, p.318). According to this notion, territory solidifies identity, and as such, it also conditions social relations. We in fact “organize our lives around spatial relations and around spatial and territorial divisions” (Shields, 1991, p.47). In this sense, one could say that social relations are “spatially constituted” (Jackson, 2003, p.39). Such relations, says Juliana Mansvelt, are maintained by the exercise of power (Mansvelt, 2005, p.56), which in the concrete case of this dissertation, is understood as territorial power exerted by two States, the United States and Mexico, over the landscape of consumption at the border. In this, it is helpful to think of space from a material perspective, as a “material product, in relation with other material elements –among others men, who themselves enter into particular social relations which give to space (...) a form, a function, a social signification” (Castells, 1977, p.113). So “underlying spatial analyses there is a general theory of social organization” (Castells, 1977, p.118).

Geographers and consumption scholars have then made compelling arguments about the need to expand our understanding of consumption with regards to space, and vice versa. Space and consumption are connected because consumption is spatially distributed and important social spaces are constructed in relation to consumption (Slater, 2003, p.149). This happens “not simply for the obvious reason that we must

consume things in place, but more importantly, because consumption is a place-creating and a place-altering act” (Sack, 1992, p.2). In this sense, “consumption is crucial in constituting social spaces” (Anderson *et al*, 2003, p.148). By purchasing or consuming products, people participate in the construction of their everyday environment. For this reason “the actions of mass consumption are among the most powerful and pervasive place building processes in the modern world” (Sack, 1988, p.643). These arguments justify the use of geography to study consumption or, in other words, the study of *geographies of consumption*, which refer to the ways in which relationships between people, things and places are constituted around the sale, purchase and use of goods and services (Mansvelt, 2005, p. 2). Geography matters in consumption not only because consumption takes place in space, but “because space is produced through consumption” (Mansvelt, 2005, p. 56).

In this, it is relevant to make reference to Lefebvre’s explanation of how space is socially produced both symbolically and materially in a context of capitalist relations of production (Lefebvre, 1974, p.67), an idea later expanded by Edward Soja, who distinguished between the firstspace, which emphasizes the materiality of spatial forms, the representations of space or our ideas about space, and the spaces of representation. Spaces of representation are spaces of “radical openness and hybridity” (Soja, 1996, p.14), the imagined geography where the “local becomes simultaneously global and general” (Soja, 1996, p.17). In the literature about consumption and space, attention to places of consumption plays, for obvious reasons, a crucial role. “Places in which consumption occurs”, says Mansvelt, “are social spaces, influencing the formation of social relations and subjectivities” (Mansvelt, 2005, p.56). In her words:

“A trip to the market, a store, a fast food restaurant, the movies or a local trader play a critical role in the meaningful creation and expression of place” (Mansvelt, 2005, p.2). Robert Sack, for his part, created a “relational framework” where commodities transform places into stages or settings in which people can express themselves (Sack in Mansvelt, 2005, p.59). Another scholar who has used a spatial approach to study consumption is Sharon Zukin. She argues that shopping districts are “*espaces vecus*”, where identities and communities are formed, particularly if they are connected with ethnicity, social class and gender (Zukin, 1995, p.190). During my fieldwork, Zukin’s work made me look at shopping spaces as “a valuable prism for viewing public culture”. “The types of goods that are sold”, she says, “at what prices and in what forms, these are the everyday experiences in which physical spaces are ‘conceived’ in the light of the social structure” (Zukin, 1995, p.257). Accordingly, I dedicated a significant portion of my ethnography to visiting the places of consumption where people supply their households in the city of Tijuana. During my visits to shopping malls, supermarkets, swap meets and neighborhood stores on both sides of the border, I gathered data about connectivity (both material and symbolic) that shoppers establish in each of them, the identities and representations that they reflect as well as the social relations in terms of membership and social exclusion that they entail. All this became particularly relevant in a context where the territorial power of the State increasingly manifests itself by restricting the geographical mobility of the border population.

In response to the thesis of global homogeneity that assumes the standardization of all spaces of consumption, Crewe and Lowe direct their attention, locally, to the meaning and identity of retail spaces, or what they called *differentiated*

spaces of consumption (Crewe and Lowe, 1995, p.1878). Indeed, as bundles of social relations, it is very important how these spaces are perceived and represented. During my research, I found in this approach a powerful tool to observe the establishment of borders and boundaries in Tijuana; consumption could be studied not only as an expression of choice, style or identity, but also a practice of everyday life that is strongly conditioned by State power. This can be done with ethnography, by finding out the ways people interpret different places of consumption (Mansvelt, 2005, p.63). This technique was particularly useful to me, because during the participant observation and interviews with Tijuana residents that I conducted over a period of two years, I was able to register some of the discourses constructed around different spaces, and the people that were perceived, informally, to patronize them. I was able to match my qualitative data with some surveys conducted in the seventies and eighties that correlated levels of income with store locations, the lower levels staying relatively close to the border where a car was not needed, and the wealthiest consumers making it all the way to shopping malls located 20 and 30 miles north of the line. In the absence of more comprehensive quantitative data, I was able to find in my fieldwork how supermarkets, small businesses, open air markets, transnational franchises and second hand stores influence the formation of social relations and subjectivities in Tijuana.

Like cities, spaces of consumption are nodes that connect consumers to material and symbolic networks, which operate regionally and globally. They are “embedded in political, economic and social relations of production” (Mansvelt, 2005, p.66). When at a specific store I pick up an item, I am in fact establishing a connection

with production and distribution networks that make it possible for the product to be on the shelf. This is what I call a pattern of connectivity. I am also connecting to frames of reference and narratives that influenced my choice, and made me familiar with certain goods. From this perspective, even transnational stores like COSCTO or Walmart perform differently, depending on which side of the border they are located. In them, people establish unequal patterns of connectivity with global, national and local networks, because each State has its own mechanisms of intervention, in regulating imports, protecting national industries, establishing quality standards, and so on. This is why State territoriality affects both products and purchasers differently on each side of the border.

6. The Politics of Infrastructure: Identity, Discipline, and the Imposition of Meaning.

In addition to its classic definitions as grantor of sovereignty, executor of legitimate violence and provider of an institutional structure to any given national community I see the State, in this dissertation, as an infrastructural network that physically and symbolically connects consumers and spaces. As such, it has the power of integrating and excluding. Both Mexico and the United States have done so in different ways. Infrastructures are important because they have the capacity to “mediate flows and connectivity”. Furthermore “changes in infrastructure have important consequences for the development and evolution of global interaction capacity” (Held and McGrew, 2000, p.58). In chapter 2, I explain that the Mexican government devoted significant efforts and resources to infrastructure-building, with

the purpose of integrating Tijuana to the national market, at a historical moment when Baja California was perceived to be vulnerable to U.S. expansionism. Later, in chapter 3, I also discuss the infrastructural changes introduced by the U.S. government with the objective of regulating and deterring cross border movement.

In recent years, scholars on the U.S. side of the border have paid significant attention to the construction of fences, ports of entry and other infrastructures that have recently transformed the landscape of the twin cities (See for instance Andreas 2000, Nevins 2002 and Ackleson 2000). Their efforts have mostly focused on discussing these infrastructures in the context of U.S. policy, and the political scene north of the border. However, not much attention has been devoted to examine the consequences such changes have had for binational interaction, particularly in the case of those living on the southern side of the border. This is a population group that is usually disregarded and ignored, despite the fact that they have seen their way of life severely altered by actions of State territoriality in the place where they live. In this dissertation, I rely on ethnography to find how infrastructural changes at the border have affected patterns of connectivity between Tijuana residents and both the northern side of the line, the global economy, and the rest of Mexico.

In their book *Splintering Urbanism*, Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin brought to my attention the fact that infrastructure is an unequal form of connectivity. Along these lines, one can argue that spaces and practices of consumption do reflect differentiated connections that are very much affected by uneven material conditions. I was also able to relate consumption with issues of identity, exclusion and access, particularly bringing the body into the equation, since “discourses and practices of

consumption locate bodies in particular spaces, emplacing identities” (Mansvelt, 2005, p.81). How bodies are interpreted and located under discursive and material contexts (Mansvelt 2005, p.100) is as important as how differentiated spaces of consumption acquire their own meaning. Space and individuals mutually transfer, receive and nurture each other’s processes of identity formation.

In this context, we can argue that there is a strong relation between bodies and politics, which becomes very evident at the border “where claims to sovereignty and aspirations of nationhood may be written on the body by practices designed to subject it to the authority that the State tries to enforce” (Hasting and Wilson, 1999, p.130). This is relevant for the dissertation chapters where I discuss the mechanics of State territoriality, and how it affects social relations, considering that identity is also related to the politics of location, which signals a strong interdependency among material, symbolic, as well as power relations (see Mansvelt, 2005, p. 100). I related consumption patterns to particular structures of power. This focus substantiated a discussion about identity, access, and exclusion. But how does this relationship work? How can we actually connect the everyday practice of consumption, and its related subjects, to the territorial exercise of power, or to be more precise, to State territoriality?

A good way to start addressing this is by briefly analyzing power in relation to the creation of meaning. In cases like the U.S.-Mexico border, scholars like Joseph Nevins (Nevins, 2002) have talked about discourses that accompany and sustain the exercise of territorial power. At the border, nationalistic discourses are very revealing, particularly if we study them in connection to policies and technologies that aim to

facilitate the exercise of State power (See for instance Ackleson, 2000 and Wilson, Thomas and Hastings, 1998). In chapter 3, I argue that such discourses are connected to infrastructures (physical, legal and virtual) that ensure a tight control of the border population, to keep in those who are considered to “belong” and out those who are not. Here, membership acquires a different meaning to the perspective used by consumption scholars like Foster, who see it in terms of shared frames of reference. This one departs from a strict legalistic notion of citizenship, a State enforced identity marked by an individual’s participation in a social contract that conveys loyalty to the State, and its particular boundaries (Migdal, 2004, p. 16). This type of membership is “at the root of the concept of citizenship, which is threatened when people go across international borders, leaving spaces where they ‘belong’ and entering places where they do not” (Torpey, 2000, p.12). It acquires a factual material shape, expressed in legislation that substantiates territoriality.

In these ways, the State imposes its own meaning over the borderlands, subordinating historical communities of belonging to the strict paradigm of citizenship. Identities are codified and institutionalized, determined by nationality, legal status, place of birth and other elements that ensure the continuity of sovereign power over a given territory. Therefore, I argue in this dissertation that at the U.S.-Mexico border, nation-States have introduced their own systems of meaning, which come with identities that are alien to this historically binational region: legal and illegal aliens, citizens and visitors, residents and tourists, temporary workers and students form a wide spectrum of categories authorities use to identify every individual who crosses the border. Each of them is given a different attributions of

mobility: some are able to live and work in the United States, but must also pay taxes. Others are allowed to cross the border, but just to shop and visit family, some others are not allowed in U.S. territory at all. In my dissertation I rely on ethnographic research and participant observation to find how these systems of meaning, which are very much anchored in law and policy, are changing local practices of everyday life like consumption, reconfiguring social relations, identities, and the way in which people relate to space. In the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, the separation between consumption and production has a lot to do with the modalities of movement assigned to the border population. Even if mutually maintaining (Edwards, 2000, p.167, see also Crewe and Lowe, 1995, p.1878,) these two activities have been codified as opposing elements. On the U.S. side, this has served as a criterion to welcome those who cross the border to consume, while criminalizing those who have the intention of working.

In this context, it is not surprising that Michel Foucault's work on governmentality helped me frame the impact of State territoriality over border residents. To Foucault, the tactic of discipline "was never more important or more valorized than at the moment when it became important to manage a population" (Foucault, 1991, p.102). I then dedicated time to study the bureaucracy created by the U.S. government to secure control of the border, techniques that go well beyond the construction of fences and the so called militarization of the border, that other authors have so brilliantly described (See Nevins, 2002 and Andreas, 2000). I was able to dissect a more subtle and complex system of surveillance and control, an "architecture of power", that involves a vast array of state-of-the-art technological

devices, both visible and invisible. The administrative State, born in the territoriality of national boundaries, corresponds to a society of regulation and discipline (Foucault, 1991, p.102). In fact, more “humble if compared to sovereignty” (Foucault, 1977, p.170) discipline been for the most part ignored in border scholarship, where attention has focused almost exclusively in the exercise of sovereignty and its consequences.

Informed by Foucault, I was able to stretch the notion of territoriality one step forward, from the creation of meaning to the imposition of discipline, which helped me explain more concretely the ways in which the State exerts control over the everyday lives of borderlanders. Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, discipline “separates, analyses, differentiates, and carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units” (Foucault, 1977, p.170). In Foucault, the premise of the *Panopticon* has in fact to do with spatial partitioning, which is based on a system of permanent registration (Foucault, 1977, p.196). Foucault linked the *Panopticon* with the State apparatus, talking about the permanent and exhaustive surveillance where the State makes “all things visible by becoming itself invisible” (Foucault, 1975, p.71). At the U.S.-Mexico border, it was scholar Toni Payán who first used the idea of the *Panopticon* to discuss a system at the border where everybody is guilty, until proven innocent (Payán, 2006, p.115). It is also worth noting whether in law enforcement, government administration or consumer marketing techniques, surveillance today is usually associated with social sorting. “It works through multiple rationalities and techniques that manage and manipulate behaviors differently, but in common they have that searchable databases are used to provide digital discrimination” (Van der Ploeg, 2006, p.221). I indeed

describe, in my third chapter, some of the databases and data storage systems that have been implemented at the border, in order to regulate and monitor the movement of every individual that goes through the international ports of entry.

In order to explain in detail my observations, I extrapolated Leigh Starr and Geoff Bowker's work on taxonomies in South Africa (See Bowker and Starr, 1999) to argue that the system established at the border relies on a legal taxonomy that classifies border residents according to their relation with the State, and their participation in the social contract. From Bruno Latour, I borrowed the notion of purity and used it to illustrate the quest for homogeneity the U.S. government has undertaken in its attempt to distribute and position bodies on what it considers "the right side" of the border. Purity of citizenship helps understand the logic underlying concrete policies that facilitate or hinder the cross-border mobility of border residents. The imperative of purity also helps explain why this architecture of power at the border seeks, by definition, to undermine the borderlander (Martínez, 1994), the hybrid (García Canclini, 2005), the monster (Starr and Bowker, 1999), the individual who does not conform with clear cut categories of membership or belonging. As I will explain in my first chapter, these individuals are formed in the midst of two imaginary communities, and can navigate between the perks, costs and benefits of two social contracts, almost in the same way they select consumer products from both sides of the border. They deconstruct, in their own body, the binary between "us" and "them" (Anzaldúa, 1999), between those who should be considered foreigners or nationals. In other words, in their daily movement across borders, borderlanders not only trespass the border itself, they also erode boundaries that communicate the differences between

communities. Thus, the notion of purity of citizenship illustrates how State territoriality imposes meaning at the borderlands. In my opinion, the classificatory system that has been implemented at the border operates as a discursive or a virtual infrastructure that supports, legitimizes and substantiates the physical and legal ones that have been set up to secure the State's territorial control over the borderlands.

Towards the end of my dissertation I suggest that the quest for homogeneity is also permeating into Tijuana's urban planning. This trend signals a dialectic relation between the border that divides north and south, with the internal fences (both material and symbolic) that segregate residents in the southern side of the border. It is part of the processes of "homogenization, differentiation and hierarchical ordering that threat through the specific geographies of the modern world" (Soja, 1996, p.17). Although there is still plenty of data to be gathered in order to fully document this trend, I point the fact that in Tijuana's urban landscape, social sorting is acquiring a spatial dimension. In a city where, historically, there used to be very few socially exclusive neighborhoods (Alegría, 2006, 269), we can now witness a process that local scholar Tito Alegría defines as the "spatial unfolding of social differences" (Alegría, 2006, p.36). I will also discuss toward the end of my dissertation, that even in a place where urban expansion is mostly unplanned and out of control, aspirations of social homogeneity are very visible in the marketing and construction of planned developments, along with utopias of safety (See for instance López Levy, 2009).

7. **Dissertation Work Plan: Mapping Subjectivity, Premises and History in Tijuana's Geography of Consumption**

My work in Tijuana was very much influenced by three preliminary, general observations that with time also became my primary argument: That territory and space are becoming more important at the borderlands, at least regarding the cross-border circulation of people. This is changing the ways in which people relate to space and to each other. That far from disappearing from Tijuana's everyday life the border is more visible and more determinant than it used to be. That the State plays a large role in regulating, limiting and obstructing the everyday movement of *Tijuanenses*, who have seen their way of life significantly affected by material manifestations of State power in the borderlands.

At this point I want to acknowledge that the U.S.-Mexico border is, and will always be, a crossroads where different stories, trajectories⁶ and visions simultaneously converge. Without discrediting other versions that may depart from opposing assumptions, a different experience or contending theoretical grounds, this dissertation will tell the reader three parallel stories: First, the *mexicanization* of the border, which manifests in stronger connections with Mexico as an infrastructural network and an imaginary community. Second, there is a trend towards the *territorialization* of the border, manifested in this case in the growing territorial power of the State that deeply affects the everyday life of border communities. Third, there is a *multiplication of borders and boundaries* that mutually reflect, produce and enforce

⁶ In this dissertation, I use the term trajectories for both people and products. I borrow it from Anselm Strauss's interactionist theory, as he defines trajectory as a course of action that embraces the interaction of multiple actors and contingencies (See Strauss, 1993, p.53).

each other, not only between north and south, but also within the city of Tijuana as well. These trends contradict some of the existing literature that deals with issues of nationalism, globalization and borders, primarily those that talk about the demise of the nation-state in the global era, the erosion of nationalism and the permeability of borders.

In my first chapter, I narrate how identities in Tijuana were built through the constant negotiation between its residents and two different States: Mexico and the United States. I show the ways in which people's fluid mobility around a binational territory, along with the establishment of a de facto free-trade regime at the border, materialized a cosmopolitan consumer culture which substantiated itself by the availability of foreign goods, and exposure to the massive impact of the consumer revolution in the United States. Given the enormous distance between Tijuana and the rest of Mexico, this culture flourished along with forms of nationalism that distinguished local residents from other Mexicans. In this chapter, I describe a scenario where there weren't many roads that connected Tijuana with the south. People who drove from Mexico City had to go first to El Paso, TX and on the U.S. side all the way to San Diego. Goods coming from Mexico were very expensive and often in bad condition. Roads were bad. So many people in Tijuana got used to the weekly trip to San Diego to buy groceries and clothes. Crossing the border was easier and faster. As a result of this, many people in Tijuana had a mental map in which the border barely existed, which in many ways connected them more with the other side of the border than with far away Mexico. This condition nested distinct hybrid identities

and a pragmatic exercise of citizenship that entailed loose and fluid connections to the nation-state.

In my second chapter I show the process through which the Mexican State aimed to secure its presence over the borderlands. Throughout most of the XX century, Mexico implemented a series of measures that included regulating the cross-border flow of merchandise, the expropriation and rationing of land use, and the incorporation of Baja California to the institutional apparatus of the State. These measures however, did not succeed in changing the local preference to purchase American goods, which kept Tijuana markets pretty isolated from the production clusters from southern and central Mexico. However, they established the setting to receive waves of southern immigrants, as well as for the monetary and fiscal policy of the 1970s and 1980s, which finally connected local and national markets. Following my discussion about territoriality, I identify in the actions of the Mexican government an effort to exert different kinds of territorial power: *Economic territoriality*, by integrating Tijuana markets to the national economy; *infrastructural territoriality*, by constructing the roads and transportation mechanisms to physically connect Tijuana with the rest of the country; and *cultural territoriality* with concrete urban plans that projected to transform parts of the city so that they resemble Mexico's city downtown, as well as the construction of cultural institutions that were to import narratives of Mexican history and identity.

In my third chapter, I describe the most visible manifestations of State territoriality on the U.S. side. The United States government became more interested in securing control of its southern border during the early eighties. As opposed to

Mexico, United States' power manifested mainly in a direct intervention over the landscape, with the construction of a series of physical, legal and virtual infrastructures that a) regulate and restrict people's mobility through specific mechanisms of deterrence (that is the construction of physical barriers to cross-border movement) and the surveillance of borderlanders (as they move across the border on a daily basis). These infrastructures also rely on the classification of people according to pre-established criteria that reinforce imperatives of sovereignty and control. They also facilitate the management of those who live in the border area. Here, the United States government increasingly exerts what I call *territoriality beyond borders*, by surveilling and controlling the movement, social relations and material conditions of those who live in the southern side of the international divide. So, while "political boundaries are always expressions of geo-power" (Paasi, 2003, p.466) I argue that political boundaries, and the social boundaries they establish, are also expressions of bio-power. Through a series of disciplinary techniques, the State of this strong country exerts its power over the bodies of borderlanders, regardless of what side of the border they occupy, giving shape to the border *Panopticon*.

In the last two chapters of this dissertation, I identify a landscape in Tijuana, where the policies I mention in chapters 2 and 3 have reorganized practices of consumption, and with them the connections of local residents with both the Mexican State and the north side of the border. In my fourth chapter, I focus on spaces of consumption (stores, supermarkets, shopping centers, open air markets, second hand stores and so on), which I see as nodes of national and transnational connectivity that produce and express relations between consumers and space, different modes of

engagement with the State, and asymmetric ways of experiencing State power in everyday life. I am particularly concerned with how people in Tijuana construct and represent differentiated spaces of consumption, and how the differences between such spaces produce, recreate and convey social boundaries among local residents, that were not so persistent before. I will explain how social distinction is increasingly tied to individual attributions of mobility. Spaces and practices of consumption become in this sense virtual checkpoints (Migdal, 2004, p.6) that as “sites of sociality and subjectivity” (Sack, 1992, p.65) mark and communicate internal differences among Tijuana residents. In addition to the physical barriers that separate Tijuana and San Diego, they establish symbolic boundaries among local residents. Because boundaries and identity are, after all, different sides of the same coin (Paasi, 2003, p.464), this chapter provides a platform for me to discuss in my fifth chapter, how identities are formed in Tijuana as a result of this re-organization and how people experience and negotiate this scenario.

As a result of the policies I describe in chapters 2 and 3, and as a reflection of the spatial practices I examine in chapter 4, my fifth chapter discusses some of the ways in which Tijuana residents have changed their relation to space –and each other– in their everyday lives. I focus primarily on how the material border that separates San Diego and Tijuana produces boundaries and check points that divide Tijuana residents in their own city. I also point out how such boundaries in turn reinforce and solidify processes of material segregation, not only between north and south, but also within the city itself. I pick elements in Tijuana’s landscape of consumption that reflect the existence of such boundaries, ranging from different consumer cultures, unequal

patterns of media reception, selective advertising and marketing strategies, to the material advantages (and disadvantages) experienced by consumers with different attributions of cross-border mobility. I use these elements to show how the classification criteria used by the U.S. government (that I describe in my third chapter) strongly influence how differences among people are constructed and interpreted. I also show a few examples of how these criteria blend into Mexico's own social, ethnic and power relations, as the inequalities that have historically plagued Mexican society expand cleavages in Tijuana that were not so pervasive before. These differences increasingly find, in the context of Tijuana, a spatial dimension which becomes visible in the new parts of the city. Finally, I also talk about some of the resources that people in Tijuana use to negotiate and bypass the growing presence of State power in their consumption practices and their everyday life.

8. Theoretical Borders and Bridges: Geographies of Consumption and the Field of Communication.

At this point it is clear that this dissertation uses a multidisciplinary approach to discuss State-society relations at the U.S.-Mexico border. I borrow elements from Sociology, History and Geography, to study consumption in relation to space in the city of Tijuana. My work also speaks to the fields of Political Science and International Relations because it contributes to an ongoing conversation about States and borders in globalization, which has occupied the attention of many scholars in those disciplines. In my work, I discuss that it is through space that both States (U.S. and Mexico) have primarily exerted and manifested its territorial power overtime. My ethnography helped me study some of the effects of such power in the everyday life of

border residents. Hence, my dissertation heavily relies on Anthropology to find out how public policy has altered the way people relate to space and the sets of meanings and social relations that come with that change.

Finally, my work also connects to the field of Communication because it uses consumption and space as vehicles that mediate social relations. They are both sustained by representational machineries that convey meaning and also lead to boundary making (Jansson, 2009, p.306). In my research I found that what and where people consume have a tremendous power communicating belonging, connectivity, otherness and domination, which are essential elements of concern in this dissertation and recurrent topics among many Communication scholars. During my fieldwork in Tijuana, I listened to how people interpreted places and products, by looking at billboards and other forms of marketing, as well as media outlets like newspapers, television and radio. Combining ethnography and media content analysis proved very useful to test my findings and conclusions about the social and spatial relations embedded in products and places and how they reflected and produced borders and boundaries.

The nexus between space and communication has already been explored by scholars in the field (See for instance Moores and Metykova, Hepp, and Salovaara, 2009). Considering Lefebvre's model of production of space (See Lefebvre, 1974) the idea that communication is a process of spatial production, material and representational (Jansson, 2009, p.307) helps understand why, in turn, studying space and how people relate to space is also a communicative process. This is why authors like Manuel Castells have placed so much attention in the different dimensions of

space, and to explain the different dynamics of each one of them (Castells, 1998, 1997 and 1977). In my work, I elaborate on the study of networks and their usefulness to study cross-border relations, as well as the trajectories of commodities in terms of production and distribution circuits that integrate markets across space. I insist that we should see these networks not only in terms of their material power to connect people, products and places, but also from a symbolic point of view, as they reflect shared frames of reference and narratives that ultimately relate people to the nation as an imagined community.

In a more general way, this dissertation engages with issues of representation, particularly representation of spaces. I mentioned before that Tijuana has been characterized as a *heteropia*, understood in Foucauldian terms as a sin city located beyond the conventional moral orders of society, “the other” to San Diego (See Felix Berumen, 2003 and Foucault, 1998). This involves issues of “othering” and representation, both powerful processes of mediation (Jansson, 2009, p.306). It is considered a side effect of global processes, where encounters with “the other” are becoming everyday phenomena for many people in the global society. Understanding “other spaces” is a way to “grasp communicative processes and battles through which belonging is de/re territorialized and de/re normalized” (Jansson, 2009, p.306). In Tijuana, these encounters started taking place decades ago. In this dissertation I argue that belonging has been territorialized, perhaps for the first time, in direct contradiction with what would be expected in a context of globalization.

Finally, I believe that the notion of territoriality involves the communication of State power, which manifests, as I explain in my third chapter, in a series of

infrastructures that not only facilitate domination, but communicate such domination, by imposing and conveying boundaries. In order for physical borders to enforce and produce boundaries among communities, there needs to be a communicative process with specific meanings and codes, a language that is shared among people that substantiates the inclusion of those who belong, and the exclusion of those who do not. In this dissertation, I have found in the study of geographies of consumption a powerful tool to observe these processes, in the particular case of the Tijuana-San Diego border.

9. Stories of a Ghost Subject: Data, Perceptions and Methodology.

When I tell people in Tijuana my work is focused on the everyday lives of *Tijuanenses*, I often receive comments along the lines of “but which *Tijuanenses*? The “real” *Tijuanenses* all live in Chula Vista these days...” And this is partly true. Many of the people who founded the city already live someplace else, either in the United States or Mexico. They have become something else. Yet, many have stayed and many more have arrived very recently. In part because of this, Tijuana has a fluid identity that is connected to the fact that, as locals often complain, it is seen as a place of passage, not a place where people establish themselves to build a future. However, this is changing in recent years. More and more people are establishing themselves with the intention of staying. In fact, Tijuana is growing at an appalling rate. Population has gone from 245 people in 1900 to 1,410,687 in 2005. Between 1980 and 2005 the number of residents tripled and between 1990 and 2005 it doubled. Between 2000 and 2005, Tijuana grew by 30 percent (See Table 1). This represents a major

challenge for scholars, social service providers and planners, making it virtually impossible to keep up with an urban monster that changes its shape constantly. Education authorities complain about the impossibility of building enough schools for every new immigrant that arrives to the city. The city grows, they say, “a classroom a day”. Indeed, part of the volatility of this dynamic place is due to the fact that it reflects the ups and downs, the twist and turns of Mexico’s unstable economy. It has historically been, says local historian David Piñera, a population sponge, an escape valve that eases tensions “in the south”, and it also has become, he says, a “thermometer of the national situation”.

This scenario greatly conditioned the type of research I conducted for this dissertation, as I had to face the challenge of studying a ghost subject that is constantly mutating, making it very problematic to categorize what I mean by *Tijuanenses*, or Tijuana residents. There seems to be consensus, however, that a *Tijuanense* is anybody who resides in the city, either for 50 years or two months. In the context of my dissertation, the length of stay did affect, in many cases, the connections a person would carry, the mental maps and the frames of reference they shared with others, but not always. Tijuana turned out to be a remarkably difficult subject, where I had to take a leap and dare to make conclusions based on observations that are not easy to generalize.

Quantitative data is remarkably scarce in Tijuana. Local agencies like chambers of commerce and merchant associations systematically discard their documentary archives due to lack of space and an overall sense that old materials have no value. It is also customary that upon leaving office, the heads of these institutions

take all the documentation with them, which then enter their personal patrimony and is often discarded by their families when they die. In this, it is worth sharing one of the local stories, about the day when members of the Institute of Historic Research at the University of Baja California learned that a government agency had just dumped all their historic documents in the municipal dumpster. In their personal vehicles and with no safety equipment whatsoever, this small group of historians turned out at the site and excavated in the garbage for a few days, in an attempt to rescue as many documents as they could. Many of these materials ended up in the University's Historic Archive, which I consulted during my stay in Tijuana. Even local offices of federal agencies like INEGI⁷ have discarded all the materials that are fifteen years or older, and sent them to a central office in Aguascalientes, Mexico. There, researchers need to undergo a lengthy bureaucratic process to obtain the information they need. After going through such process myself, I had to wait several months to receive an email from INEGI's headquarters where they let me know that the information I had requested was "temporarily unavailable, in the processed of being classified".

I was however able to get a hold of some localized studies about consumers and consumer trends in Tijuana, mostly conducted in particularistic fashions by either marketing firms or local development research agencies (See for instance Economic Research Bureau and 1979, and *Centro Comercial Plaza Rio, 1979?*). At the same time, some academic studies conducted by scholars in the seventies and early eighties gave me clues about Tijuana's markets and their integration to the Mexican economy

⁷ National Institute of Geography and Statistics, for its Spanish acronym, INEGI is the Mexican Bureau of the Census.

(See for instance Bilbao, 1986, Martis, 1970, Musbach, James, 1980, Negrete 1988, Noriega, 1982). Finally, policy research institutions in San Diego have produced some reports that gave account of legal crossings at the border, and their impact in the local economy (See for instance, SANDAG, 2006, and San Diego Dialogue, 1994). If not sufficient, this data did help me illustrate some of trends I detected during my interviews with Tijuana residents.

By and large, the difficulties in obtaining quantitative data left me with no long-term indicators, like income, housing conditions, media consumption and the like that would have been useful to document what I discussed in my historical chapters. At the same time, I would have benefitted from survey information to correlate specific consumption habits to place of birth, level of income, access to a visa, and the area where people reside. However, I also learned to overcome the sense that my data was not reliable because it was not quantitatively consistent, by resorting to a plurality of methods through which I could see it was historically credible. Difficult to quantify, the trends I observed in Tijuana also seemed too complex to be represented in a data base, and yet very relevant to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the issues I address in this dissertation. I then had to rely on people's narratives and memories, newspapers content analysis, archival research, textual analysis of marketing strategies and, perhaps most importantly, a two-and-a-half year period of participant observation and in-depth interviews where I had the opportunity to listen to what *Tijuanenses* from all walks of life have to say about their city.

I divided my informants into four categories: long term residents, new comers, policy-makers and academics. With the help of local historians, I put together an

initial list of potential informants, people who had been already interviewed plenty of times, mostly men who had played a role in producing written memories of Tijuana. I visited these people in their homes and on several occasions, the interview drew other members of the family, particularly their wives. Some of them took personal interest in my project and contributed ideas and connections that were sometimes even more useful than the data I obtained from their husbands. So far, histories of Tijuana have focused on official events, political processes and economic aspects, but no one has become seriously engaged with issues of everyday life. My work disconcerted some, who did not understand why, on occasions, I found it more useful to interview the wife than the husband, a housewife instead of a famous former politician, or a flower shop owner in lieu of the city's authority in local history.

Once I interviewed someone, I tried to gain access to other generations within the same family, so that I could obtain a multigenerational view. This approach was useful at the beginning, but as I progressed in my research, my criteria and my protocols became more flexible, and I started interviewing people from all walks of life. I interviewed a taxi driver who once took me home from the airport; people I met through common acquaintances that had shared experiences I thought were worth researching, neighbors and people from my son's community of friends. With time, I also started approaching people who owned businesses which I found interesting, and occasionally, they approached me on their own to tell me their stories. In my own everyday life, I learned to bring my notebook during my visits to my neighborhood's butcher, the baker around the corner, the seamstress, my hairdresser, the little store where I bought party supplies for my son's birthdays, and so on.

It is then not surprising that ethnography became for me such a powerful tool to document trends that I think are worth studying but for which it is hard to obtain quantitative data. In fact establishing my residence south of the border for a period of two and a half years, turning the method of participant observation into part of my own daily life, proved to be the most powerful tool a researcher can find when studying a city as complex, fluid and dynamic as Tijuana. In my own flesh and bones I was forced to experience the same material conditions which with many *Tijuanenses* live every day. In finding supplies for my home, I visited different spaces of consumption, from shopping malls to thrift stores. Navigating exchange rates and customs laws, I learned that avocados are cheaper in Tijuana, but lettuce is better in San Diego. I found which vendors in the market had products from my hometown and how to save myself a trip to the “other side”, if all I needed was to buy a cheap birthday gift. I also experienced many obstacles to my own cross-border mobility from long lines to cross the border to several months of paperwork processing where I found myself unable to go to San Diego. My own mobility and immobility made me aware of the ways in which local residents experience state power in their everyday life. The experience also exposed me to issues that, like I said earlier, are often unspoken and not evident in the way people relate to each other, and yet very present. I witnessed violent arrests and standoffs at gunpoint when waiting in line, as a result of which I lived with the same generalized fear of institutional violence as the rest of border crossers. I learned to be afraid if the agents at the booths were rude and snapped at me, and sigh in relief if they decided to be nice and wave me in. Nothing special, nothing the rest were not experiencing. As my advisor once said to me when I

complained about this: “It is amazing the kinds of things regular people have to go through in order to go on with their lives”. In this corner of the world, where everyday life regularly coexists with a state of exception, this is a story worth telling.

It is also worth noting that while studying long term trends has been very useful for me to identify changes in the way borderlanders experience the border, periodization has been a major challenge in this dissertation. By and large, I identify two different scenarios. I talk about the first one in chapter 1, when I describe a relatively fluid borderline, where many people established a way of life that was sustained by the circulation of people over a binational territory. In my fourth and fifth chapters, I discuss a second scenario where cross-border mobility is strictly regulated by U.S. authorities, and crossing the border becomes more of a privilege. I suggest this scenario is more prevalent in recent times. I have kept these periods vague on purpose, since there are still elements of the first one in our lives today, and there were certainly some of the second one in the experiences people had before. However, as I discuss in this dissertation, I do believe that there is far less of the first scenario in today’s Tijuana, and that this has to do with the governmental actions that I describe in my second and third chapters. This flexible approach is inspired by what Raymond Williams has called an “epochal analysis”, where he identifies dominant, residual and emergent trends in cultural processes (Williams, 1977, p.121). By residual, Williams means something effectively formed in the past but still active, which still shows some distance from the effective dominant culture. This illustrates what I describe in my first chapter. He uses “emergent” to refer to new meanings and values, practices and

relationships that are continually being created (Williams, 1977, pp. 122-123) which I discuss in my fourth and fifth chapters.

Despite the problems I encountered when dealing with Tijuana's past, it is however relevant to emphasize that in this dissertation, history has proved to be, as Robert Alvarez says, a lot "more than context" (Alvarez, 1995, p.462). It has helped me to see the border as a dynamic entity that is constantly reinvented, both by the government that dictates policies to manage and control it, as well as by the people who live and experience such policies (See Chávez, 2007, p.9). Territoriality, boundaries and identities are not natural or primordial, but rather situational and contextual (Paasi, 1999, p.79). They are dynamic and relative, and as manifestations of State territorial power change at the U.S.-Mexico border, so do the social relations that, as I show in this dissertation, ultimately materialize in the everyday practice of consumption. Thus, approaching geographies of consumption with a historical perspective has made me keep in mind that the border that we know today is not the border that our grandparents and parents, or even our childhood years got to know. It also allows us to imagine and dream of a different border than the one that is being imposed upon us. Let's always rely on history in order to not forget the way the border used to be, as it is remembered by the people from Tijuana; let's also allow their memories and experiences to remind us, always, that with its hard hope, *con su esperanza dura*, the south also exists.

TABLES**Table 1.** Population in Tijuana Since 1900

Tijuana's Population Since 1900	
1900	245
1910	733
1920	1,028
1930	1,526
1940	21077
1950	32751
1960	165,690
1970	340,583
1980	461,257
1990	1,110,140
2005	1,483,992
<i>Source: INEGI</i>	

CHAPTER 1. “TOO FAR FROM GOD, TOO CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES”: CONSUMPTION CULTURES IN TIJUANA.

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will trace the connections between economies, practices and spaces in Tijuana as a mean to explore the commercial cultures¹ that developed in this border city between 1930 and 1980. I will argue that cross-border consumption practices led to a consumer culture that reflected relative material wealth in comparison to the rest of Mexico. I will tie this culture to economic conditions shaped by the enormous distance that separated this city from the main Mexican production hubs, as well as the geographical closeness to the US market. Finally, I will show how this led *Tijuanenses* to produce in their everyday lives a territory that spread beyond national boundaries, which nested distinct hybrid identities and a pragmatic exercise of citizenship that entailed a loose connection to the nation-state.

In Tijuana, geography and economics converged to produce conditions of existence (Bourdieu, 1980, p.56) marked by the habit of constantly crossing the border to consume. With their coming and going across the international frontier, *Tijuanenses* challenged the meaning of community from a territorial perspective (Chávez, 2006, p.5). In the confines of the nation-state, this mobile community produced a landscape of fluidity from one side of the fence to the other. The historical roots of cross-border consumption date, according to historians, from the arrival of the railroad to San Diego in the late nineteenth century. This is when “U.S. goods altered patterns of

¹ See Maansvelt, 2005, p.127.

consumption throughout the Mexican north. Fashions and foods replaced and shaped local habits, in particular supplanting European varieties, which became more expensive than their U.S. counterparts” (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.143).

Territory informs key aspects of collective and individual identities, as it shapes and is shaped by collective, social and self consciousness (Delaney, 2005, p.8). For this reason, it is relevant that people from Tijuana nurtured their identity with collective memories and shared experiences that simultaneously occurred across the limits of two nation-states. By doing so, they established very distinctive patterns of connectivity with Mexico’s national network, cultivating forms of nationalism that was not paired by territorial integration, were not tied to the consumption of Mexican goods and did not anchor “the imagined national community in their ordinary everyday practice” (Foster, 2002., p. 65).

However, life at the border is often torn by contradictions, and I will show here how the lack of integration of Tijuana’s market into the national economy, and the practices that flourished as a result, produced a consumer culture that strongly connected local residents with the other side of the border. And, as consumption spaces and goods available on the northern side the border represented an intrinsic part of the cultural map of *Tijuanenses*, the deep cleavage between the two economies manifested itself in another discrepancy, between a relative material wealth that characterized border consumption cultures, and a context of urban poverty.

2. Goods, Place and Meaning in Tijuana's Everyday Life

“Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States”, the famous phrase that has so decisively sculpted Mexican public discourse and policy throughout the twentieth century, could not apply more tangibly than in the case of Tijuana. Of all Mexican cities, this corner of the nation is the one located at the most distant point from the capital, and close, very close, to the United States. For decades, geographical distance added to the lack of roads and infrastructure to travel from one point to the other. Until the late 1940s, travel from Mexico City to Tijuana required traversing the U.S.-Mexico border twice, first into El Paso, Texas, west on the U.S. side all the way to California, and finally back into Mexican territory, through the San Ysidro port of entry.

As a result, goods coming from southern Mexico were scarce and expensive, and often the quality was not as desirable as that of products acquired in San Diego. Stores in Tijuana were usually small and under-stocked. Transportation costs made competition with US products almost impossible, so the merchandise that made it to the border area was often too expensive and of bad quality. Some of the old residents I interviewed remember how fabrics coming from the south would often rip or damage after the first wash, and food was easily in bad condition, since refrigeration systems were not good enough for produce or dairy to endure the long trip.

Local production was also limited by foreign competition, and aside from obtaining some produce from fields in the La Mesa area (Historia Viva, 1996, p.148) many *Tijuanenses* got used to do their shopping in San Diego. As I will explain in the next chapter, this practice had been facilitated by the Mexican federal government in

1933, with the establishment of the Free Zone (*Zona Libre*), which exempted the area from import taxes, with the purpose of easing the hardships produced by the “impossibility to obtain at a reasonable price products needed in daily life, which were not supplied by producers in central Mexico, due to the enormous distance” (Piñera, 1985, p.130).

Those who lived in Tijuana in the fifties and sixties remember that they patronized, for instance, the Dairy Mart Farm that was located right across the border² where they purchased butter, cheese, milk and, according to old resident Marina Gutierrez, “the best ice cream in the whole world”. Chula Vista also had some small shopping centers with stores to buy groceries and other products employed in everyday life. Later on, in the early sixties, shopping centers like College Grove, Mission Valley and Grossmont became visible in San Diego’s suburban landscape, and turned into popular shopping destinations for residents from both sides of the border (Ganster, Piñera and Padilla, 2000, p.5).

In the late fifties, downtown San Diego opened department stores like Woolworth, Sears and JC Penney that offered clothes, shoes, purses as well as household appliances that by then were invading the market in the United States. At that time, many remember, department stores were not as sophisticated as today. One of the residents I interviewed recalls “a third of Woolworth was a diner, where one

² Despite the trend to buy these goods in San Diego, Tijuana also developed a milk industry of its own since in 1926, with *Pasteurizaría La Suiza* which later turned into *Leche Jersey*. By the early 1970s there were three plants (Jersey, *La Vaquita* and *Alonso*) that had in total around 50 trucks that delivered dairy products on a daily basis (Soto Fuentes, 1976, pp.218).

could have lunch or ice cream, and the rest would sell gifts and souvenirs, some clothes, as well as a reduced drugstore”.

Window-shopping was a novelty. Tijuana families would go together on weekends and walk around downtown San Diego or Chula Vista, in a festive combination of leisure and an international experience. Marina Gutierrez, a child in 1965, still remembers “the madness about going to the Chula Vista Shopping Center during the month of December and seeing crystal covered booths with a Christmas landscape, or a pack of tiny penguins moving around, the same crazy fever that later inspired Fashion Valley” (See Map 1). Five years later, in a thesis related to the issue of border crossing, Kenneth Martis corroborated this by reporting that, aside from availability, variety, price and quality, “many Mexicans, especially the upper class, indicate they like the large good ‘clean’ store, the way products are arranged on the shelves, in essence, the ‘marketing expertise’ of the American stores. The Chula Vista shopping center is a perfect example of the ‘pleasant’ type of shopping area. There is nothing like this in all of Tijuana” (Martis, 1970, p.55). It was also around that time, in 1964, that Sea World was inaugurated, and it became a tradition among families and schools to organize visits to the new park, as well as the San Diego Zoo and even as far as Disneyland³ (Ganster, Piñera and Padilla, 2000, p.5).

Indeed, the combination of *paseo* and *mandado* (leisure and house errands) to “the other side” has survived in the everyday lives of *Tijuanenses* for generations. It

³ Even if the children did not have entry documents to the United States, U.S. authorities issued waivers that allowed school buses to go through the ports of entry, transporting students to local museums and attractions. This practice lasted until right after the events of September 11, 2001, when US authorities suspended that practice.

nurtured deeply rooted practices of transnational mobility, which materialized in a consumer culture that both expressed and produced an enormous distance between Tijuana and the rest of Mexico, as well as its proximity to the fastest developing market in the world. Hence, going shopping with the family to “the other side”, has historically been in Tijuana a practice of everyday life, almost like going to church in the small towns of southern Mexico, and walking around the main plaza on a Sunday afternoon.

Already in the 1970s, John Price, a scholar from UCLA doing fieldwork in Tijuana, observed that: “housewives cross the border to buy chicken, lard, beans, rice, eggs, potatoes and other food items that are less expensive in the U.S. Mexican retailers and whole salers purchase heavily in the U.S., in part simply because of the relative inaccessibility and long transport haul from the markets of interior Mexico” (Price, 1973, p.88.) Statistically, the presence of Tijuana shoppers in the San Diego area was significant. Although there do not seem to be any existing data prior to 1965, numbers show a sustained growth in the money spent by Tijuana shoppers in San Diego since that year, as it increased from 63 million in that year to 119 in 1974 (San Diego Human Resources in Bilbao, 1995, p.41, see Table 2). Later, in the mid seventies, The San Diego Chamber of Commerce found in a study that, between 1976 and 1977, Tijuana consumers spent between 210 and 380 million dollars in the San Diego area, and the estimated purchases exceeded 407 million in 1978 (Bilbao, 1995, p.40).

In a similar research project conducted in 1978 on eleven local shopping centers, also by the Chamber of Commerce, it was found that 7.5 percent of the total

of taxed retail sales was made to consumers from Tijuana (Bilbao, 1995, p.41). Here, it was remarkable that the importance of Tijuana consumers grew in those shopping centers that were closer to the border: In San Ysidro, 80.9 percent of sales were made to *Tijuanenses*, while in downtown San Diego (See Map 1) the percentage was 23.5 and in La Jolla of 8.9 percent (Economic Development Bureau, 1979, p.12.) The shopping centers that received more Mexican customers were Chula Vista Shopping Center (23.5%), South Bay Plaza (10.6%) and Fashion Valley (10%) (See Table 3, Economic Development Bureau, 1979, p.9).

These data reveal a strong cross-border integration between Tijuana consumers and San Diego merchants, which is significant also if we consider the 1976 peso devaluation, and the implementation of programs conducted by the Mexican government to integrate Tijuana markets to the Mexican production network, which I will describe in further detail in the next chapter. Such an intense cross border interaction had a visible effect in the way Tijuanenses constructed the space where they circulated on a daily basis, since actions of mass consumption are among “the most powerful and pervasive place building processes in the modern world” (Sack, 1988, p. 643.) Tijuana’s experience is a good example of this, given that the recurrent practice of shopping across the borderline⁴ and the goods acquired on the other side reflected and substantiated, as instances of material culture (McCraken, 1990, p.75,) constructions of the border space as a continuum. As the old residents I interviewed convincingly conveyed to me, people felt the northern side of the line was also a part of home.

⁴ As, according to Jon Bird, places are constructed through spatial practices (Bird, 1993, p.25).

3. **Material Culture and Geographical Mobility of A Cosmopolitan Community**

For Tijuana residents, crossing the border was easier and faster than it is today, which gave local residents a sense of immediacy and the possibility to incorporate San Diego into the “mental map” (Migdal, 2004, p.6) they produced with the everyday practice of consumption. In the words of a house maker who had her children in the fifties and sixties: “After dropping my kids at school in the morning, I sometimes noticed that I did not have milk, eggs or something else, so I would go to ‘the other side’ to get them, came back to cook soup, and still made it on time to pick them up at two in the afternoon”.

Old resident Fernando Manjarrez recalls that it was very easy to have a passport and to cross the border:

FM: “The port of entry was small, three or four doors at the most, and we would already know the inspectors. Some of them were from here. It once happened to me that I forgot my passport⁵, and he let me go. *Pásele*, he said.

MM: He knew you.

FM: Yes indeed. Back then, the highest percentage of border crossers was composed by people who went shopping.

This was confirmed by Kenneth Martis who wrote in his thesis:

The non-resident alien’s primary reason for crossing is to shop. The weekly food shopping trip across the border is usually destined to San Ysidro. San Ysidro carries the products Mexicans want and makes a special effort to attract the border clientele. Many San Ysidro markets advertise in Tijuana and have small buses which pick customers up at the border station, take them to their particular market, and transport them back to the border (Martis, 1970, p. 52)

⁵ Tijuana residents tend to use passport and visa indistinctively, as if there were no difference between the ability to exit the country, for which a passport is required, and enter another country, which would require a visa.

Therefore, crossing the border was considered a “normal thing”. According to the recollections of Samuel Cuevas, another old resident who now chairs an amateur historical society:

In the sixties, everybody could go to San Diego. There were not as many requirements as there are today. People would go shopping to those neat shopping centers, it was like a party, a *romería*, you would find the entire family there. Our currency had purchasing power. Middle class people would go to enjoy concerts. And poor people that had their little *tienditas* would cross to get their merchandise. There was no social distinction in crossing the border.

Because people participate in the construction of their everyday environment by purchasing or consuming products (Sack, 1988, p. 643), the fluid geographies of cross-border consumption in the Tijuana of the fifties and sixties also helped produce a very cosmopolitan atmosphere among its residents, which called the attention of new comers and visitors (Historia Viva, 1996, p.148). This environment both manifested and was reinforced by the proximity to stores in San Diego and the tax exemptions that facilitated the establishment of businesses that sold fine products from around the world.

Stores like *Swed Imports*, *Sara* and *Maxims*, located mainly in downtown Tijuana, specialized in top quality imports for a competitive price. In the words of Aída Gálvez, who was born in Tijuana during the 1930s, they had “fabulous perfumes, jewelry, ties, and the very best in the whole world, from here, from Europe, China, everywhere. This is why we have always dressed very well in Tijuana, both men and women. Because of that way of acquiring things” she said as she showed me pictures of exquisitely dressed young women lining up for the photographer in extravagant

parties or social gatherings. For affluent shoppers from both sides of the border this was good because “One did not need to go to Europe to buy these things”, as one of them said to me.

However, one did not need to be rich to partake of this culture. Even for those who were not wealthy, the availability of these goods became a very visible part of local culture (Douglas, 1979,) creating standards of elegance that marked a stark contrast with the poor infrastructure in the city. Ramira Lacave, a lady of modest origin who was born in Tijuana in the 1930s, remembers the dress code of the time: “the shoes and the belt always had to match the purse, and clothes weren’t so expensive”, she recalls. Indeed, as I will explain later, even nowadays, poverty is not so much expressed in the lack of access to goods, as in other parts of Mexico, but in deficient infrastructure⁶.

It took around 30 minutes to go from Tijuana to downtown San Diego. For those who did not own a vehicle, there were people who would drive passengers all the way there for a small amount of money. “It didn’t feel far, it was easy back then” said Ramira Lacave, who would make her way with her mother from the modest *colonia* where she lived to the fancy department stores that revolutionized shopping in the United States, during the 1940s and 1950s. Years later, in the early eighties, Sergio Noriega, a local academic wrote that Tijuana’s Population growth and consumerism contributed to the formation of a huge and dynamic market, in which one could guess

⁶ I thank Jorge Riquelme for making me note this, in a series of field visits related to research project “Public schools and the empowerment of poor communities across the U.S.-Mexico border”, 2002. In fact, during group interviews conducted as part of this project, the availability of goods was revealed as one of the most important motivations, along with jobs, for people from southern Mexico to move to Tijuana.

more goods per cápita were used than in any other part of the country. In his words, this was “a market where needs are created faster than the income to satisfy them, where commercial offer grows as fast as taste...An heterogeneous market that is at the same time provincial and cosmopolitan, both for the rich and poor” (Noriega, 1982, p.56).

Despite its commercial vitality, Tijuana was still a small town where class distinctions did not feel so sharp⁷, since the city had a “fluid social structure”, compared to the rest of Mexico (Ganster, Piñera and Padilla, 2000, p.14.) Regarding this, John Price wrote in 1973: “The frontier background has contributed to a distinctive character even to the developing of urban cultures in the area. The traditional ascriptive social classes are almost meaningless in the north because of the strength of egalitarianism” (Price, 1973, p.2). Indeed, old residents remember that in Tijuana “social differences were not so apparent, rich and poor went to the same parties” (Historia Viva, 1996, p.16). For instance, all of my interviewees who lived there during the fifties mentioned that the whole town, regardless of social class, celebrated Independence Day at *Parque Teniente Guerrero*, one of the very few public plazas in the city.

Moreover, Tijuana had higher levels and a better distribution of income than the rest of Mexico. Many people’s earnings positioned them in the middle class,

⁷ Some authors attribute this to the fact that, being relatively young compared to other cities, Tijuana never experienced traditional forms of social and economic relations that were pervasive in the south and center of Mexico, and it was since the beginning an urban society, considered to be more “modern” than others. It is also interesting that among the four Baja Californian cities, those who were more connected to the US economy (Tijuana and Tecate) appeared to be more egalitarian than those more tied to Mexico’s economic structures (Mexicali and Ensenada), See Garcia Montaña, 1987, pp.15, 45-59.

according to national standards. While in 1970, only 25.7 percent in Mexico earned between 1000 and 4999 pesos per month, 64.7 percent of Tijuana residents disposed of these earnings. And, in contrast to 71.8 percent of people in the interior making the lowest monthly incomes (between 199 and 999 pesos), only 27.3 of *Tijuanenses* obtained that amount (See Table 4). As opposed to the south, social differences are not manifested in the clothes a person wears. This was brought up to me at a party, by an old resident. She said to me that: “In southern Mexico people’s appearances are much more important than here at the border, because they actually indicate the person’s social class. Here, we have the benefit of the border, anyone can dress well with twenty dollars, and this is not the case in Mexico City. People are much more concerned about how they ‘look’ down there”.

Radio and television ownership in Tijuana homes was significantly high. In 1960, 46 percent of border residents owned a television set, in contrast with 29 percent throughout Mexico (INEGI). Ten years later, in 1970, 70.6 percent of the people living in Tijuana had a television set. In addition, it is remarkable that until the late sixties, Tijuana audiences had only access to television in English that transmitted in the region from stations located on both sides of the border. This is important because, aside from the political socialization that unfolds nation-making, anthropologists recognize that commodity consumption and commercial media bring a national frame of reference to the everyday life of people. Robert Foster, for instance, studied how advertisement in Papua New Guinea became an important vehicle for the imagination of a community of consumers whose shared consumption practices and ideals put them in experiential unison with each other (Foster, 2002, p.64).

Hence, the generation that grew up during those years in Tijuana was exposed to the same media content as San Diegan children. Many learned to speak English like natives, thought in pounds and miles (as opposed to kilograms and kilometers), and shared the same frames of reference with those of their age from the northern side of the border, and not with their fellow Mexicans from the south. Through TV, they were exposed to the same cartoons, the same news and the same publicity as American kids. In the words of Marina Gutierrez:

When I was little there were only American channels. Not even Channel 12. So our cartoons, and everything else, were in English. They played Popeye⁸ at 3, right after lunch, and I would watch Popeye and Porky. We liked artists and celebrities from the United States, we did not know Mexican artists until much later, when we were able to see Mexican programming on Channel 12. I remember then watching Rocío Durcal on Mondays, during the *Cine Juvenil* (youth cinema) series, as well as Palito Ortega.⁹ But this was much later. When I was a little girl, TV was only in English.

Even before the arrival of television, *Tijuananenses* had the opportunity to learn English through the daily interaction they had with American vendors on the other side of the border. In fact, Mexicans crossing the border at the time did have to learn English to communicate with merchants and service providers, as opposed to nowadays when, says Ramira Lacave, everybody speaks Spanish. Another informant, Francisco Remus, who visited San Diego from southern Mexico in the early seventies, also noted that, unlike today, nobody spoke Spanish in the establishments of downtown San Diego. Often, Language and culture differences in such interactions

⁸ Raised in Tijuana, Marina pronounced Popeye the American way, unlike Mexican kids who were exposed to dubbed versions and therefore knew cartoon characters by other names.

⁹ Both Rocío Durcal and Palito Ortega were famous singers and actors that became prevalent among teenagers during the 1960s in Latin America and Spain.

with Anglo Americans were remembered with humor and blended into the ways people represented themselves and what they considered to be “the other”. Here is an example of how Aída Gálvez, a child in the 1940s, remembers how her shopping experiences helped her to learn English:

My dad liked to buy in San Diego’s 12th street. He used to take us there. I was a little girl back then and did not speak English yet. So he would tell me, look *mijita*, see that stand? Go to the guy and tell him “*Canta Lupe*” (Lupe sings), and he will give you a melon. So I obediently did as told and got a melon, since in English you say “cantaloupe”. So this is how we started learning English: buying things.

4. Consumption and Identity in the Absence of the National Market

In his work about nested identities, David Knight proposed understanding the concept of identity from a territorial perspective, in terms of the relationship with the geography and space in which people acquire specific attributes in distinction to others. Territory, he said, is what solidifies identity as opposed to memory or feelings (Knight, 1999, p. 317). In this fashion, people produced in Tijuana, with the practice of cross-border consumption, a binational territory where the border did not exist, which nested a local identity with both strong nationalistic and hybrid components, very distinctive in the things people possessed and displayed.

In Mexico, as well as other places of Latin America that implemented ISI¹⁰, there was a symbolic value in consuming national products, which was tied to an economic and social rationality of accessibility. People would buy Mexican products

¹⁰ The Import Substitution model of Industrialization, ISI, was implemented in Mexico during most of the second half of the twentieth century with the objective of building a national industrial base. This model consisted, among other elements, on protecting national markets by strongly restricting and taxing imports.

because they were cheaper and more available, but also because they enforced a sense of identity sustained in a clear definition between *lo propio y lo ajeno* (what is ours and what is foreign, García Canclini, 1995, p.30). Foreign goods were only consumed by a much restricted elite and were a symbol of status. In contrast with this pattern, to consume a foreign good at the border did not necessarily entail an extraordinary symbol of status or connect with any construction of identity (García Canclini, 1995, p.31). As Ramira Lacave told me: “We have always been Mexicans. We speak English and we buy American butter because we live at a border. It is the businesses’ fault that always brought the worst products from the interior to the border”.

From different perspectives, scholars have regarded material culture as a mean of communicating political (Mukerji, 1997, p.21) or national identities (Foster, 2002). Others, like Mary Douglas, also argue that commercial goods carry cultural meaning (Douglas, 1979). In Tijuana, it is remarkable that consumer and material cultures that were so strongly attached to the United States were also combined with strong nationalistic feelings. In his study of Tijuana in the 1930s, Paul Vanderwood noted that Tijuana was:

Largely dependent on San Diego for essential supplies, money, livelihood, and emergency services, but its residents struggled against that dependency clinging to values, morals, habits and customs that thought the best of Mexican society. While they knew they were economically dependent they did not feel socially, politically, or psychologically dependent. They proudly flew their nation’s tricolor and despite complaints against the central government, especially in the judicial system and overall arrogance, at civic celebrations they proudly insisted ‘we are Mexicans’ and demanded respect for their country (Vanderwood, 2004, p.134).

In the south and center of Mexico, the years of protected markets imposed among elites, middle classes, and popular movements a sense of conformity with what was made available by the economy. People were “happy with what they had” (García Canclini, 1995, p.31), either by choice or by necessity. As a Tijuana hairdresser told me once, while telling me about the pleasures of shopping in San Diego: *En México, uno se aguanta con lo que tiene* (In Mexico, you must conform yourself with what you have). In Tijuana, however, the world of the discount store triggered patterns of taste and desire that reflected an open system of access and choice which, if not a national identity, entailed a condition of binationality and the capacity to negotiate between two economies. Consuming represented for *Tijuanenses* the possibility of making a rational choice about a product. In the words of an old resident: “By living next to them it turned a very natural thing, a part of our life to have a passport and go shopping to the other side. We locals realize that this has given us a very special way of life, since we chose what was more convenient to us” (Historia Viva, 1996, p.26.)

A good case in point to illustrate this is the habit *Tijuanenses* have (to this day) of crossing the border for pouring gas. In 2006, a local newspaper conducted a survey among Tijuana drivers in which they were asked, given escalating gas prices in southern California, where they preferred to buy gas. A very high percentage of drivers with entry documents (68 percent) declared that, even when gas was 12 percent more expensive on “the other side”, they still preferred it to PEMEX¹¹. A high

¹¹ PEMEX is the state-owned petroleum monopoly in Mexico. It is the 10th largest oil company in the world and was created after President Lázaro Cárdenas expropriated the oil industry in 1938.

proportion of these respondents (58 percent) related this preference to better quality and a lack of trust in local gas stations (39 percent) (Mier, 2005).

What are then, considering the communicative power of material goods (Featherstone, 1987, p.57) the implications of buying Shell instead of PEMEX, or American butter rather than a Mexican brand? Despite being considered *malinchistas* by their fellow citizens from the south for choosing Shell instead of PEMEX, *Tijuanaenses* have always argued pragmatic reasons of quality and price. In defense of this preference, a border economist wrote: “to state that border population’s preferences towards consuming American products constitutes an antinationalistic attitude conveys ignorance about the natural trend workers have to protect and maximize their income” (Mungaray, 1988, p. 239).

When I followed up about the gas consumption survey with my own informants, and I asked old residents where they used to buy gas, many responded that they did so in the United States because “Mexican gas destroys car engines”, also revealing a lack of faith in institutions as intrinsically nationalistic as PEMEX. However, others responded that they made choices indiscriminately; depending on which side of the border they found themselves at the specific moment of running out of gas. Consumption choices were in this case tied to random circumstances of time and place, as people circulated around a territory oblivious of the lines that divided it. After all, consumption is as much a cultural and physical act as an economic one (Mukerji, 1997, p.301) that involves physical movement from the home to the store or market. Shopping across the border became way of life. It revealed a cultural fluidity and a freedom of movement between two contiguous spaces, both physically and

culturally, where people connected to production and commercial circuits enclosed in two different national settings. It is, in this sense, that local identity was deeply rooted on mobility, the same as Chicano writer Santiago Vaquera-Vázquez wrote from the northern side: “My identity is as rooted in place and space as it is enforced by movement” (Vaquera-Vázquez, 2006, p.700).

If it is clear that *Tijuanenses* have historically defended their “mexicanness”, it is undeniable that they also constructed an identity that distinguished them from other Mexicans. For decades, middle and upper class families would send their children to college either in the United States or other parts of Mexico, because there were not universities in the area. Those who traveled back and forth talk about the contrasts between themselves and other Mexicans, and how their fellow citizens saw them as Americans, because they dressed like Americans. Identity, in this case, was configured by practices of cross-border consumption, and depended upon people’s possessions (García Canclini, 1995, p.30) and on the mobility across borders that enabled people to acquire things. Indeed, *Tijuanenses* displayed material goods that ISI made unavailable in Mexico. When they traveled south, they were considered a vanguard in fashion, introducing clothes, music and tastes that were not yet known or popular. One of my informants managed to fund his studies in Guadalajara by selling American watches, blue jeans and T-shirts among his fellow students from other parts of the country.

It is also worth noting, that this condition of “convenience” that allowed *Tijuanenses* to pick and choose products and services from both sides of the border can also be observed, occasionally, in the exercise of citizenship. At the border, people

are born on one side, but grow up on another, and oftentimes their legal status does not correspond to the imaginary community that they predominantly share, particularly because of schooling. Children who go to school in San Diego recite the pledge of allegiance every morning, celebrate American holidays and learn about American historical heroes. It is also not uncommon to meet grownups who received part of their education in San Diego but were born in Tijuana, or others who are American citizens by birth but they went to school south of the border, so they received their civic education in Mexico. In the long term, this provides borderlanders with a degree of flexibility, as they learn to alternate their participation in two social contracts as it suits them, using their access to social services on both sides of the border, living on one side to avoid taxes on the other, and so on. Some are registered to vote on one side but are more familiar with political developments on the other. Needless to say that, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3, this is tremendously problematic for both governments, not only because of identity formation (and national allegiances), most importantly, because it makes it difficult to manage the border population.

In this scenario where identities and legalities confused belonging to the nation-state, borderlanders have developed strong local attachments. Consistent with what Pablo Vila found in border cities such as Ciudad Juárez (See Vila, 2000 and 2004) being from Tijuana represented a bond for those living there. They shared a locally rooted identity, and aside from Anglo-Americans, new comers represented “the other”. In Juárez, says Vila, regional identity is very strong among most residents. In his words:

At the same time that *Juarenses* establish a regional identity that distinguishes them from other Mexicans, they also differentiate themselves from the Americans on the other side of the border. This is not a contradiction in relation to their valued Fronterizo identity, because although they frame their access to the United States as a valuable resource, this does not mean that they necessarily want to live in the United States or become Mexican American (Vila, 2000, p.29.)

In Tijuana, these distinctions are strongly enforced (to the day) by the boundaries between old and new residents, as old residents proudly identify themselves as *tijuanenses de toda la vida* (long-time *Tijuanenses*). Like *Juarenses*, many long-time *Tijuanenses* blame new comers for the city's problems, poverty, chaos and crime (Vila, 2000, p.29). And, during my conversations with people from Mexico City who over the past two decades have established themselves in the city, it is clear that as they arrived, they had to build their own social networks because they were not accepted in those of the old residents. During the years I lived there, I was amused of how some mothers complained that their children "spoke with a *chilango* accent" because they interacted with too many kids who came from the south. Initially, newcomers were also geographically located in areas where long-time *Tijuanenses* did not live. According to a local urban historian:

Newcomers would move to *colonias* in the outskirts of the city, and isolated themselves from traditional *Tijuanenses*, so their presence was not felt in the old parts of the city. Each *colonia* had an identity. *Colonia libertad*¹² has a distinctive identity that survives even today. They were seen as "*otra clase de tijuanenses*"(Another kind of

¹² Located to the east of the San Ysidro port of entry, and adjacent to the international border, *Colonia Libertad* was found in the aftermath of labor struggles during the 1920s, by members of the *Liga Obrera Nacionalista* (Nationalist Worker's League) and other worker's unions. It later was populated by the deportees from the United States during the 1930s and by the Bracero Agreement, as many workers who labored in southern California during the week brought their families to Tijuana, eventually establishing themselves in *Colonia Libertad* (See Bustamante, 1990).

Tijuanenses). This is when you start feeling a sense of otherness in the city. People from Colonia Libertad were “the other” (See Map 2).

Even though they are lately becoming a minority; since around half of Tijuana’s population is born outside of Baja California (INEGI, 2000), *Tijuanense’s* strong local roots has not been ignored by marketers who today advertise products that come from the south. This is shown, for instance, by *Leche Lala*, a Mexican milk producer, that has put together a campaign to lure local consumers. In an obvious effort to win a market that stays loyal to local names like *Leche Jersey* or *Altadena*, *Lala* has displayed around the city billboards with images of people claiming to come from specific places in Baja California, like the Guadalupe Valley, Tecate or Mexicali, with the intention of tying the consumption of *Lala* to local roots (See Figure 1).

5. A Broken American Dream: Local Consumer Cultures and the National Economy

Tijuana’s relative material wealth did not converge with the development of an economic capacity to satisfy people’s needs and expectations. In other words, materialism and capitalism did not develop interdependently, like in most industrialized societies (Mukerjee, 1983, p.243). In fact, border economies were de facto exceptions to ISI, and consumer and material cultures grew more in correspondence to economic trends in the United States, in clear disjuncture with the national economic strategy of development.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, economic analysts attributed the main problems affecting the border economy to “the lack of a sufficiently stable and

competitive production structure, and weak ties to the rest of the country” (Ross, 1978, p.155). In Price’s words:

A weak integration of Baja California with the rest of Mexico has been one of the dominant factors in Tijuana’s whole history. Its geographical separation as an isolated peninsula from the mainland of Mexico has meant that communication and transportation between Baja California and the rest of Mexico have been difficult and expensive. This has perpetuated its frontier character, while economic ties with the U.S. have become of great importance (Price, 1973, p.27).

Clearly, Mexico’s producers were absent from border markets first because of the enormous distance from Mexican industrial clusters and also due to the generalized preference for American goods and services among local consumers (Ross, 1978, p.157). In 1968, for instance, it was found that 84 percent of families in Mexicali did their routine shopping in the United States (Ross, 1978, p.155), and in 1970 26 percent of domestic expenditures in Tijuana went either to imports or shopping in San Ysidro, Chula Vista, San Diego or other places in Southern California (Noriega, 1982, p.61).

The border economy was strongly inclined to commerce, services, transportation and communication. Between 1950 and 1980, tertiary activities represented 70 percent of the state of Baja California’s total GDP, while industry related activities only amounted 17 percent and the agricultural sector only 16 percent (See Table 5). Nonetheless, other urban economies in the state were not so absorbed by the US market as Tijuana. In the late 1950s, the Mexicali Valley was mostly devoted to growing cotton, and was starting to grow a limited chemical industry to support the agricultural sector with fertilizers and pesticides. Tecate developed a beer

industry and some mining, and Ensenada benefited from fisheries, mining and agriculture (wineries). Tijuana however, mostly exploited its closeness to the border, both with tourism and commerce (Consejo de Planeación, 1958, p.58).

Low prices in San Diego nurtured economic activity south of the border, turning Tijuana into a commercial hub for imported products, brought to the city by well established businesses or private individuals who would make their living by buying in San Diego and selling in Tijuana clothes, appliances, furniture, auto parts, construction materials, both new and second hand. In the context of the great income differences between Tijuana and San Diego, this also means that *Tijuanenses* extensively benefit (to the day) from what San Diego discards to dress, build, eat, and in any form that materially supports their everyday life.

At the same time, the clash between two cultures as radically different as those of the United States and Mexico, turned Tijuana into a golden land of opportunity, and some people have made fortunes out of nontraditional consumption related activities. During my fieldwork, I talked to individuals who became rich by smuggling lard and powder milk during Second World War, when both cities were subject to the same rationing systems; second hand clothes that were then cut and sold to local industries for cleaning machinery; and innards that were discarded from San Diego butcher houses, transported south of the border and sold to Tijuana *taquerías*. In this particular case, it was a win-win opportunity, since the merchant obtained a payment for relieving the butcher of the burden, and a second payment for a product that is considered a delicacy in Mexico.

Tijuana was a market in constant expansion, “first because of the sustained demographic growth that brought dynamism to the city, and also due to the fact that the new border residents adapted very quickly to the consumption habits of the American people” (my translation, Noriega Verdugo, 1982, p. 56). The thousands of immigrants that constantly arrived to the city throughout its history rapidly “changed their traditional consumption patterns and adapted to a metropolitan life that was strongly influenced by foreign tourism and the American media, that transmitted values that were expanding in American consumer society, prompting *Tijuanenses* to massive consumption” (my translation, Noriega Verdugo, 1982, p.56). Indeed, according to Price’s observations, during the nineteen seventies “moving to Tijuana meant owning a car, a television set and other appliances that were beyond the reach of most workers in the interior” (Price, 1973, p.44).

The expansion of Tijuana’s market and the consumption cultures it cultivated were fueled by the growing capacity by American businesses to supply local demand. In the 1930s, Keynesianism’s orientation towards spending prompted a rapid increase in the supply of goods that also impacted border communities on the Mexican side. Later on, the war economy and the post-war economic boom were based on consumers buying washing machines, TV sets, and automobiles they could never afford before (Zukin, 2005, p.13). This fever also reached households in Tijuana, who for instance, were the first ones in Mexico to get television sets. As an old resident told me: “We in Tijuana we are the most fortunate in the whole world. Right after new things come out, we get them at the same time as the *gringos*”.

In many ways, *Tijuanenses* witnessed and participated in the consumer revolution that took place in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. They experienced the changes in “concepts of time and space, society, individual, family and State” that revolutionized the United States during those years (McCracken, 1990, p.1) and contributed, in Southern California, to the “production of a new landscape of consumption organized by discount stores and shopping malls” (Zukin, 2005 p. 81). In sum, people living in Tijuana also took part of the process that turned the United States into “the exemplary model of imagining and measuring the nature and pace of consumption, creating its own language and symbolism of what it meant to be a ‘consumer society’” (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006, p.2).

As noted by Sharon Zukin, during those years “stores, manufacturers and journalists in the United States promoted a vast array of branded products, including sneakers and toys, to satisfy cravings for individual identity, social status and a sense of membership in a national culture” (Zukin, 2005, p.13). Those trends traveled south of the border into Tijuana promoting, as I have explained and will further discuss later in this chapter a hybrid sense of membership in the Mexican nation.

In the United States “buying a house, at least one car, and domestic equipment integrated households into a national landscape of mass-production and consumption” (Zukin, 1991, p.140). In Tijuana, people nurtured the same material expectations and desires that, reinforced by exposure to American TV, produced, according to Leonardo Sanchez, a young *Tijuanense* whom I interviewed, a feeling of “having American society in Tijuana”, embodied in the access to material goods that were unavailable in other parts of Mexico. In Leonardo’s words: “We thought that we were

part of the American dream because we had the American dream, but it was not true”. Instead, *Tijuanaenses* benefitted from an economic process that took place within the limits of another nation, even if its territory felt “so much like home”. As I will show in Chapters 2 and 3, both U.S. and Mexican State policies aimed to secure territorial control, both coming from the governments of the United States and Mexico, eventually curtailed these feelings of fulfilling the American dream.

6. Hybrid Landscapes: Fluidity, Urban Poverty, and Domestic Transnational Practices

Car ownership, which facilitates people’s mobility to consume, is another interesting indicator that shows in the case of Tijuana close ties with American consumer cultures. In Tijuana, more people owned a car than in any other Mexican city. In the words of Samuel Cuevas: “Here, it was possible to buy a *carcachita* with relative ease. With 300 dollars you had its little engine working and you could move around”. And figures confirm this. Using data from the *Departamento de Tránsito* (the local DMV) Price found that in 1965, 75 per cent of households had one or more vehicles, probably the highest per capita car ownership in Mexico, where only 10 per cent of households owned a car.

Indeed, when I visited my informants in their houses, they often pulled out old photo albums to show me aspects of their lives in Tijuana and I saw many family pictures of people getting ready for a party, a social gathering, or a trip, which often showed a family car, standing on an unpaved road. When looking at these pictures, I often asked myself about the irony of those cars (some of them fancy) circulating on muddy, bumpy roads, and the contradictions that entailed. While enjoying a relative

material wealth, *Tijuananese*s often endured as well, many hardships related to the city's overall infrastructural poverty.

According to Sharon Zukin, "landscape represents the architecture of social class, gender and race relations imposed by powerful institutions" (Zukin, 1991, p.16). At the border, urban landscapes are considered a convenient visual medium for interpreting border cities as places, and a vehicle for understanding place personality. They can act as mirrors of the society as a whole, and convey important messages about cultural meaning (Arreola and Curtis, 1993, pp.8-9). From the air, travelers arriving in Tijuana by airplane were struck by the view of *Cartolandia*, a huge slum where around 1500 families lived in miserable conditions (Soto, 1976, p.188). It extended along the border, in the basin of the Tijuana River, underneath the bridge through which tourists had to go on their way to *Avenida Revolución* and therefore gave the first impression of the city to many visitors.

The unpaved roads and the Tijuana River also revealed a lack of sanitary infrastructure. Before it was canalized in 1972 (Padilla, 2004), it would overflow during rainstorms, sweeping everything built on the side, and people who visited the city in the mid 1960s, remember the way from the airport to the San Ysidro Port of entry as "the gateway to hell". One of my informants, who as a child landed in Tijuana on his way to Los Angeles from Mexico City, illustrated this state of abandonment with the following description of the road to San Diego, during a rainy day:

Our way was slow and bumpy, since the rain had taken the pavement leaving instead dirt, stones and potholes. To the left I saw *Cartolandia* and, along the road that descended towards some houses a hill that was totally covered with garbage, since it was turned into the municipal dumpster. Blocking passage to other vehicles, a truck was unloading

waste and there was a terrible smell. I imagined that in the summer it for sure stunk even worse, packed with vultures. In that time of the year, there were only dozens of stray dogs, goats and pigs that looked for something to eat, spreading the trash and making it slide towards the houses. There were some homeless who searched for something valuable, either monetary or nutritional. More than only misery, it was a scene of abandonment by authorities, which obviously did not care what people thought of the job they were doing, or their city or their country.

Yet “the landscape between San Diego and Tijuana was uninterrupted’ (Cruz, 2006). There was a “visual fluidity” (Zukin, 1991, p.138) that corresponded to people’s regular movement. In Cruz’s words: “There are photos showing the border at Colonia Libertad in the early 70s without a fence, and children flying kites oblivious of the political boundary” (Cruz, 2006). On the areas located between the San Ysidro Port of Entry and *Playas de Tijuana*, the landscape also conveyed the continuity. People who in the early 1970s lived in those populated hills, that face San Diego on the western side of San Ysidro (*Colonia Castillo, Soler* and *Zona Norte*), still remember the fallen wire fence that divided Tijuana from the agricultural fields of the other side, which children used as a sort of backyard for play and mischief. Residents of those neighborhoods remember that people would not necessarily cross the border through the port of entry but also walk through the fields. Depending on where they were going, it made no sense to go all the way to San Ysidro (See Map 2).

Although infrastructure conditions were not necessarily worse than in rural Mexico, there was a visible lack of investment in public space, particularly if compared with other cities. While a few well off areas enjoyed basic services such as running water, gas and pavement, most of the new *colonias* where people of low

income were established lacked basic services. Very much in tune with the findings I've reported here, Price found, in a survey he conducted about quality of life, more prosperity in what he called the "private sector", in terms of "high household incomes and high levels of ownership of vehicles, televisions and other appliances" than in the "public sector", or utilities such as piped water, sewer drainage, and the paving and lightening of residential streets (Price, 1973, p.78).

In Price's words: "People come to Tijuana to partake of its relative affluence, with high pay and much more material wealth, but they find a very high cost of living and many difficulties in daily living". (Price, 1973, p. 96). A good example of this was the scarcity of water, which represented a daily struggle for ordinary activities like doing laundry. But owning a car facilitated mobility, particularly cross-border mobility, which in this case would make it easier to access the laundry mats on "the other side". In words of Marina Gutierrez:

Something very distinctive about *Tijuanenses* was the huge mobilization entailed in doing laundry. Even if people had a washing machine, there was no water, and if there was water, it required a huge investment in softeners and filters. People would devote hours to the laundry enterprise. For years, I went to Chula Vista with my family once a week to do laundry. It was a part of our Saturday routine. There was a supermarket and a laundry mart on E Street. My mom would put all the clothes in five or six washing machines, and would leave me with my dad watching them while she went grocery shopping.

When I asked Marina Gutierrez if they would find acquaintances at E Street, she replied: "Of course. The whole town (Tijuana) was there". And indeed, next-door neighbors would meet across the border in the establishments of southern California they patronized. Very much in tune with the Mexican tradition according to which commercial areas are not only places of exchange but also of interaction (Arreola and

Curtis, 1993, p.117), San Diego streets and stores were part of everyday conversation, through which people constructed narratives of their everyday life. Gossip, quarrels, memories and social networks would circulate around places like “*la calle tercera*”, (Third Street), “*la laundry mart*”, “*la Broadway*” (which was both a street and a store), and so on. This produced what Price characterized as “a trans-culturation of foods, architecture, dress and many other customs in both directions across the border” (Price, 1973, p. 155).

Such “trans-culturation” was very present in the city’s urban landscape, which as I discussed was placed in a fluid territory that people constructed with their constant movement, in the context of a material culture comparable to that of the United States. It left an imprint in the landscape, which in turn reflected people’s values, tastes and dreams. And it was the American dream to own a house, so people preferred to build their house than to rent. In 1970, for example, around half the houses in the city were inhabited by their owners (INEGI.)

Architecture often combined both the Mexican and US traditions. Construction materials from Mexico were scarce and there was not much demand for them. In fact, roughly one half of the houses in the city in 1950 and 1960 were made of wood (INEGI), as opposed to adobe and brick, which were more common in southern Mexico. By the 1970s some merchants started transporting construction materials from the south and in twenty years, houses made of brick and cement increased from 8.5 percent in 1950 to 43.8 in 1970, comparable to the aggregate percentage in the whole country (44.15%). Still, in 1970 46 percent of houses were made of wood in Tijuana, and in comparison, the aggregate percentage for Mexico was only 16 percent

(INEGI). As opposed to Tijuana, where a minority of the houses was made of adobe (4.45 percent), 30 percent of the houses in Mexico were made of adobe.

Most of the houses that were made of wood were imported prefabricated constructions, which people transported through what was known as *La Puerta Negra* (The black door) an additional point of entry located to the west of the San Ysidro that was wide enough to allow the passage of such loads. These were good quality buildings that dated from the 1900, no longer with a value in their places of origin, so the new owners only paid for transportation costs and import permits (Soto, 1976, pp.223-224). Those with fewer resources also mastered the use of waste in building their houses. “We had here a dumpster with more than a million tires”, recalls Samuel Cuevas “so people used them to own their houses.” In the words of a local historian, “Tijuana’s population’s needs are in constant evolution, and they have found an affordable way of building housing, using the most basic construction products (...) that allow to build walls and roofs at an extraordinarily rapid pace” (Soto, 1976, 223-224).

Circulating around Tijuana’s old areas, it is still possible to see many of the old constructions. Made with doubled pitched roofs and often painted in festive colors, they add to the neighborhood street a flavor of the San Diegan neighborhoods of National City or San Ysidro. Some have evolved during the years into complex and confusing mélanges of styles, which incorporate imported garage doors and Mexican iron fences that, along with a creative use of waste in construction, have given architects, artists and planners so many elements to discuss about Tijuana’s aesthetic personality (See for instance INSite, 2005). Of all places, the landscape is, in this city,

a visual materialization of people's social interactions with "the other side" as well as distinct patterns of connectivity with Mexico in which, as I have exposed in this chapter, consumption plays a very important role.

7. The Landscape in the Body: Borderlanders, Binationals, Hybrids and Monsters

I have explained in this chapter how the fluid geographies that developed throughout the years in Tijuana nested unique local identities nourished by a binational geography of consumption. Although it is undeniable that most *Tijuanenses* felt very "Mexican", it is also true that some of their attributes (Knight, 1999, p.317) and patterns of connectivity did cross the nation's borders, which in a way encouraged a sense of membership to those communities of the "other side". From the television shows they watched, to the publicity they were exposed to, and the material goods they acquired and preferred, *Tijuanenses* shared with Americans an imagined "material" community that included common references and memories of events that took place in the binational territory that they inhabited.

The issue of national and trans-national identities in Tijuana has been widely discussed, from scholars that contend the perception that Tijuana is not sufficiently "Mexican" (See for instance Bustamante 1992 and Mungaray, 1988) to the celebration of their transnational attributes (See for instance Monsivais 1978 and García Canclini, 2005). Oscar Martínez, for his part, elaborated a typology of borderlanders, in which he divided them into nationals and transnationals. Within the category of nationals, one can count transient migrants, who come to the border on their way to the United States; uniculturalists, who remain unaffected by U.S. culture; and nationalists, who

are vehemently anti United States (Martínez, 1998, 67-73). Among the transnationalists, there are binational consumers, people who “are very knowledgeable about the comparative advantages of making selected purchases at home and others abroad” (Martínez, 1998, p.77); settler migrants, who move to the border in search of a better life; commuters, who work on the U.S. side while residing in Mexico; biculturalists, who show many attributes of American culture; and binationalists, who were born on the U.S. side and move back and forth constantly (Martínez, 1998, 77-89).

While Martínez’ typology provides with a very useful reference to understand what he calls the Mexican “border types” (he elaborated a similar map for Anglos and another one for Mexican Americans), during my interactions with Tijuanaenses I often found two or more of these categories being present in a single individual, which manifested unevenly in different aspects of a person’s life. Useful in this discussion is Georg Sorensen’s explanation of nationhood, in the context of the modern State “defined as a people within a territory making up a community based on citizenship (including political, social and economic rights and obligations) and a community of sentiment (meaning common language, a common culture and historical identity based on literature, myths, symbols music and art” (Sorensen, 2004, p83). As I have discussed here, and will elaborate more in the next chapter, Tijuana nested the formation of hybrid communities of sentiment and citizenship, which challenged the categories of membership established by the pattern of the modern State.

Indeed, Tijuana has been considered by authors like García Canclini to be a laboratory of post-modernity (García Canclini, 2005), in part because its people make

indistinct the lines established by binary categories of identity (See Anzaldúa, 1999). Their transnational connections implied “a blurring and reordering of the binary cultural, social and epistemological distinction of the modern period” (Kearny, 1988, p.121). Along these lines, borderlanders challenged standards of purity established in the spirit of modernity (Latour, 1993, p.11). As I discussed here, this manifested in the relationship with the nation, or what Sorensen called a community of sentiment, but also, as I will explain in the following text, in their patterns of connectivity with the State, and the ways they exercised their membership in the social contract, their belonging to a community of citizenship (Béjar and Capello, 1988, p.12, also see Bendix, 1977).

This was brought up to me by Patricio Méndez, a veteran of Tijuana’s television, when talking to me about how the landscapes of fluidity that one could observe in Tijuana could become troublesome to purist notions of citizenship, particularly regarding those born or who went to school on “the other side”: “They know neither the history of Mexico nor that of the United States, they don’t speak proper English or Spanish, they turn into hybrids, they can’t establish only on one side of the border, and they always make decisions in terms of *convenience*, they are *opportunistic*”. These people, he reminded me, situate themselves in the intersection of two legal systems, often bypassing and “stretching” the laws of the two countries, and they call their situation an advantage, a matter of *convenience*. “I run into many of them around here” he said,

and when you ask them where they are from, they’re from nowhere, from everywhere. They then come with those elaborate explanations: I was born on “the other side” but I live here, but I have American

license plates¹³ but I went to school in Tijuana. So why do you say you are Mexican? They are Mexican when it is *convenient* and American when it is not.

Some attribute this to the fact that, as I will discuss in further detail in the next chapter, the institutions of Mexico's post-revolutionary State took too long to make themselves present in Tijuana. Since identity has a cultural and an institutional component: "The political, the social and the economic are the fields where a national identity is developed, given the fact that the State is able to establish a reciprocal relationship between the citizen's demands and its expectations of citizenship (my translation)" (Béjar and Capello, 1988, p.20). Others would relate it to the border condition, since "borders are contradictory zones of culture and power where the thin processes of State centralization and national homogenization are disrupted" (Wilson and Hastings, 1998, p.21). And, if we consider the argument that identities are nested in territory (Kight, 1999, p.307), it is also valid to view the political identity of the borderlander as nested in a binational territory and nurtured by a landscape of material fluidity. Not surprisingly, this entails the exercise of the hybrid citizenship that accompanies the "impure" identities based on convenience that Mr. Méndez described for me.

Along these lines, I had a chance to meet in Tijuana defectors from the Vietnam War, but also veterans who showed with pride their American flags and army pictures¹⁴, and U.S. citizens that lived south of the border for tax reasons, or who had a

¹³ Which in this case would allow the purchase of a more affordable U.S. manufactured vehicle and the possibility to drive it without having to pay import taxes in Mexico.

¹⁴ In this, it is worth mentioning the scandal provoked by a U.S. army recruiter during the first years of the Iraq war. He decided to cross the border to Tijuana and distribute recruiting materials in a local high

disabled child for whom the Mexican social security provided free medication, or an elderly relative whose care was more affordable on the Mexican side. During my research, I interviewed, for instance, a young U.S.-born woman who was planning to have her baby in Tijuana. Because her parents were Mexican-born, she had access to Mexican citizenship, which granted her the possibility of inheriting property in Mexico. However, if born in San Diego, her baby would have lost those privileges. As soon as she could, she registered him at the U.S. consulate so that he could have citizenship rights on both sides of the border. These cases are common in Tijuana, creating a diverse and often confusing universe of intersections: Americans that feel Mexican, Mexicans with a U.S. social security number, some who vote in Mexico, some in the United States, and some on both places... With his comment about convenience, Mr. Méndez made me notice that at the border, citizenship, in terms of the rights and obligations it entails, can be negotiated with the same pragmatic logic of choosing butter or gas, according to considerations of quality and price. It can become, in this sense, a commodity, itemized and compared across borders. In this fashion, the borderlands are present and visible in the bodies of people as Anzaldúa argued, but also in their exercise of citizenship.

Living in Tijuana, on Memorial Day or the Fourth of July, I would see children who were schooled in San Diego playing at home enjoying their day off, as they brought American paper flags and other school projects home, while their older or younger siblings who stayed on “this side” for school would get their school breaks on

school. When interviewed by the press, the recruiter mentioned the fact that a significant number of students were eligible, either U.S. citizens or permanent residents.
See: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article3326.htm>.

Mexican Independence day (September 15) or the anniversary of the Revolution (November 20). The reasons for sending children to study on “the other side” are many, ranging from wanting them to speak English like natives, discontent with a particular Tijuana teacher or school, or simply the convenience of closeness with someone’s job. However, I once asked the mother of an eight year old what made her decide to “return” to the Mexican school. She then told me the story of her son, who wrote a letter in *Spanglish* to his grandparents in Zacatecas that he finished with a “los kiero moucho”¹⁵ which convinced her that the kid’s Spanish writing needed to be cultivated as well as his English skills. Particularly with girls, it is also common that after finishing elementary school on the U.S. side, they return to Tijuana to do middle and high school, often to catholic schools, to keep them away from the liberal sexual practices of their peers from “the other side”.

For a while, I tried to make sense of these patterns of geographical mobility: Why there? Why here? Why first here and then there? What sorts of multiple combinations will these freely crafted sequences bring to these children’s sense of membership, as they learn to bypass the binary categories of identity and belonging to both imagined communities? (Starr and Bowker, 1999, p.305-306). One of the mothers from my child’s school told me the answer: “Well this is just the way it is. Some go there for elementary and return for middle school because they think the kids will learn basic English and will then come back to study Spanish and Mexican

¹⁵ The boy was using English phonetics to construct the phrase, which in proper Spanish would be “los quiero mucho”.

history. Some others do it the other way around. In the end *cada cabeza es un mundo* (different strokes for different folks)".

Indeed, as Leigh Starr and Geoff Bowker reflect when they discuss Anzaldúa's creative depiction of the borderlands: "the doubleness and the ambiguity of the male-female, straight-gay, Mexican-American borderland becomes the cauldron for a creative approach to surviving, a rejection of simplistic purity and of essentialist categories" (Starr and Bowker, 1999, 305). Citizenship here can indeed be crafted according to every individual rationale, *cada cabeza*, and is experienced differently in every body. People socialized in this random and fluid landscapes become marginals, monsters, part of "a residual category", insomuch they belong to different communities of practice (Starr and Bowker, 1999, 300-302). They learn to negotiate multiple identities as they mutate when they cross the border and they carry them on as they move. Despite their indisputable "mexicaness" they are also comfortable with the "language and things used by that group of others" (Leigh and Geog, p.285). This is why supermarkets and local stores in Tijuana have specials for *El Dia del pavo* (Thanksgiving) or *El Dia de la coneja* (Easter), which become part of "an expanded cultural repertoire that allows border residents to fashion new cultural worlds and to function in the world of others" (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.144).

Because the figure of the borderlander, binational, hybrid or monster often times challenges the notions of "purity of citizenship" dictated by the standards of the modern State, and due to the perspective of comparative convenience some of them tend to adopt in their participation of the social contract, there is a tendency to consider them a challenge to the nation- state and particularly to sovereignty

(Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.23). States indeed, “need to control their borders because they are their first lines of defense, institutions of social coercion and symbols of a variety of State powers. But the people of borders are often members of political institutions and informal networks that compete with the State” (Wilson and Hastings, 1998, p.10).

This explains the concerns of both the U.S. and Mexican governments to secure their territorial power over the borderlands. In the next chapters, I explain how State territoriality manifested in the context of the deeply asymmetric relationship between Mexico with its powerful northern neighbor: While between the 1920s and the 1970s, Mexico gradually increased its efforts to incorporate Tijuana markets and people into a national infrastructural grid, and the Mexican imagined community, the United States became more concerned with tightening its grip on the region towards the late 1980s, by ensuring the physical control of the land as well as restricting the movement of people. As I will discuss in the third chapter, this trend has been escalating ever since, dramatically intensifying after September 11, of 2001.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Tijuana’s economic and geographical distance from the Mexican mainland favored cross-border consumption practices that led to a material culture of relative abundance of goods. At the same time *Tijuanenses* produced, with the constant transactions and interactions entailed in such practices, a territory in their mental maps and everyday lives that was oblivious of the international line. Such territory nested a distinct local identity characterized by

people's constant mobility across the border and a consumer culture strongly tied to an open system of access and choice that had a lot in common to that of the United States, but broke with standards and values that prevailed in Mexico.

People living in Tijuana participated in the consumer revolution that took place in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, and had access to many of the goods that were made available to the American public during those years. For this reason, they also shared with those from across the border patterns of desire and frames of reference that were uncommon in the rest of Mexico. With this, they revealed social and cultural attributes that reflected the long distance between Tijuana and the mainland. They also expressed a very unique connection to the nation-state, characterized by an "impure" exercise of citizenship and a selective sense of membership, which on the one hand did not include the same consumer culture as in other parts of Mexico, and on the other reflected a fluid, rational and pragmatic mode of engaging in the social contract.

I have described here the picture of a place that was materially detached from the nation where it was anchored. As I have discussed, this produced interesting discrepancies between people's consumer cultures and Mexico's economic base, as well as the material conditions in which its residents conducted their everyday life. This explains, to some extent, the fact that social differences were not as tied to the possession of goods as to the lack of urban infrastructure. In this context, *Tijuanenses* built social relations among them and with "the other side" that socially and visually reflected a condition where transnational mobility was not necessarily a privilege, and where people shared common experiences of crossing the border on a daily basis as

well as a similar material culture. Later in this dissertation I will show how policies of State territoriality reorganized these relations into more homogeneous categories arranged according to legal standards that, if always present, were not so prevalent during the years that I study in this chapter. In the next chapter, I will address a series of measures taken by the Mexican government throughout time, to re-direct cross-border consumption to the purchase of Mexican goods, as part of a broader strategy of State-territoriality that ultimately aimed towards territorial integration of this remote area to Mexico's national network.

TABLES

Table 2. Mexican Visitor Spending in San Diego County (1965-1974)

Year	Spending in million dollars	Border crossing in million people
1965	63	10.6
1966	71.5	11.9
1967	77.2	12.3
1968	94.5	15.3
1969	108.4	16.8
1970	93.9	15
1971	78.6	13.1
1972	84	14
1973	112.2	18.7
1974	119.4	19.9
Average	90.3	14.8
Source: <i>San Diego Human Resources Agency</i> 1975, in Bilbao, 1995, p.41.		

Table 3. Survey of Estimated Mexican Citizen Taxable Retail Purchases at San Diego Regional Shopping Centers (1977)

Regional Shopping Center	Percent of Sales Transacted with Mexican Nationals	1977 Center Sales Volume (in dollars)	Sales to Mexican Citizens (in dollars)
Chula Vista	23.5	71,975	16790
South Bay Plaza	20.6	22,222	4575
Fashion Valley	10.0	110,902	11090
Mission Valley	9.5	109,959	10466
University Town Center	5.6	71,000	3976
Grossmont Center	2.8	48,476	1345
College Grove	2.2	31,429	697
Parkway Plaza	1.2	85,287	1023
El Camino Real	.9	48,222	434
Clairemont Square	.5	31,886	150
Escondido	.5	47,675	252
Total		679,033	50778
Source: <i>Economic Research Bureau, Economic Analysis of Mexican Citizen Activity in San Diego County, San Diego Chamber of Commerce, May 1979, p. 9.</i>			

Table 4. Income Distribution in Mexico and Tijuana in 1970
(Mexican Pesos)

Monthly Income (in Pesos)	Mexico	Tijuana
	%	%
Up to 199	18.4	4.8
200-499	26.5	6.4
500-999	26.9	16.1
1000 a 1499	12.7	25.3
1500-2499	8.2	23.3
2500-4999	4.8	16.1
5000-9999	1.7	5.6
10000 and more	.9	2.4
Source: Sergio Noriega Verdugo, <i>Ensayos Económicos sobre Baja California</i> , UABC, 1982.		

Table 5. GDP in Baja California, by Sector (1950-1980)
(Percentages)

Sector	1950	1960	1970	1980	Average
Primary sector (agriculture and cattle)	17.6	18.7	17.2	10	15.87
Secondary sector (industry, construction and electricity)	11.7	14.9	19.7	22.6	17.22
Tertiary sector (commerce, services, transportation and communication)	74.1	66.3	63.0	69.4	68.2
Source: Sergio Noriega Verdugo, <i>Ensayos Económicos sobre Baja California</i> , UABC, 1982.					

CHAPTER 2. MEXICO IN TIJUANA. THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL STATE

1. Introduction

As the border between California and Baja California was finally defined in 1848, Mexico's government soon became aware of the need to protect the country's sovereignty over its northern territories against its rapacious northern neighbor. Because of its virtual state of insularity and the episodes of foreign incursions that it experienced in the early 1900s¹, the distant and unpopulated Baja California peninsula was a source of particular concern. In this chapter I will provide an overview of how, with border policies that took place throughout the twentieth century, the Mexican State gradually increased its territorial control over Tijuana. Mostly, I will focus on the efforts to re-direct consumption towards Mexican goods, which implied providing physical forms of connectivity with Mexico's industrial hubs, implementing economic policies that regulated cross-border transactions and also inserting the city in the country's imagined community.

After the Revolution, the young Mexican State was drawn by a need to consolidate its boundaries and prevent the loss of more territory. As part of a spatial strategy to affect, influence and control resources and people (Sack, 1986, p. 1) the

¹ Between January and June of 1911, an armed group occupied the northern district of Baja California (Mexicali, El Álamo and Tijuana). The group was formed by members of the Mexican Liberal Party, ranchers and indigenous groups, as well as Americans, who were members of the Socialist Party and an organization called Industrial Workers of the World. Some of them were interested in annexation of the Mexicali Valley to the United States. The majority of Bajacalifornians joined the army against this movement. They saw it as an expression of filibusterism with the intention of integrating Baja California to the United States. They united in arms in defense of what they called "national integrity" (See Samaniego, 2007, p.1203.)

goal was to “mexicanize” and populate the border, besides fostering economic activity as a way of leaving a national inprint in the land. This was particularly true in the case of Tijuana, which by the 1920s had become an enclave of gambling and drinking businesses that flourished in the shadow of prohibition in the United States (mostly in the hands of American citizens). In the words of a scholar of the time:

It is undeniable that there is a need to methodically organize the exploitation of natural resources, which would bring great benefits to the nation’s economy at the time that we would promote in the Baja California peninsula healthy activities that are very distinct from the ones that prevail today. At the same time, this would allow the region to be populated, and give it respectability before other nations that always had greedy interests in that corner of our motherland (Riquelme, 1937, p.130)

The gradual integration of Tijuana to Mexico then became part of the nation building project that engaged the post-revolutionary State during most of the twentieth century. This process was slow and intangible at first because of economic and institutional weaknesses, as well as the lack of knowledge that prevailed about Tijuana, which was often believed to be part of the United States. This shows in a passport that was given to Ramira Lacave’s family, one of the old residents I interviewed for this project, who immigrated to the city in 1926. The document stated the final destination of the travelers as “Tijuana, California.”

In this chapter, I point out two processes, very much embedded in each other, that reflected and promoted integration to the Mexican homeland: the reach of the national network and the mexicanization of the landscape. By the former I mean the nationalization of foreign property (including land ownership), the arrival of State institutions, national stores and Mexican media, economic development plans, and a

cultural policy that would promote a sense of *mexicanidad* among the population. In sum, the implementation of policies that incorporated the northern territories into the institutional network of the corporate state. By the latter I refer to the effects of this integration in the city's landscape in ways that that enhanced regulation (with customs) and connectivity (with roads), as well as urban development plans that materialized the Mexican imagined community in Tijuana's urban scene.

2. Economic Territoriality and the *Aduana de Tijuana*

Territoriality becomes active as it implicates itself in the fabric of lives, with the examination of papers, the paying of bribes or duties, the seizure of contraband, the movement of troops, and the immobilization of aliens (Sack, 1986). In Tijuana, this first happened in 1874, with the establishment of the *Aduana Fronteriza* (Border Customs), which was built to impose the interest of the Mexican government over the local economy.

During those years, commercial routes that connected the region to the southwestern United States were oblivious of the border. Stagecoaches from San Diego stopped in Tijuana, and supplied Mexican towns and posthouses along the way from Tijuana to places as distant as San Antonio, Texas and Saint Louis Missouri. At the same time, the Yuma-San Diego railroad entered Southern California through Tijuana, after crossing four times, at different points, the international border (Cabuto, 2005). Because the flow of merchandise increased towards the 1870s, the Mexican government decided to establish the *Aduana*, to tax commercial exchanges and regulate trade (Piñera, 2003, p.54).

The *Aduana* soon became the symbol of an intrusive State that hindered local prosperity. The measure affected locals, who usually obtained all their supplies in San Diego, and also the cross-border transit of cattle, as the government now forced ranchers to pay fees. The unpopularity of the *Aduana* soon became evident, and *Tijuanenses* fought against it both through peaceful and violent means, vandalizing the facility several times (Piñera, 2003, p.55).

In the local scenery, the *Aduana* building had “a solid and imposing appearance, like a fortification. It stood out from other constructions in town (...) and was constantly cited in American publicity as an example of Mexican culture” (Padilla, 1989, p. 73). Indeed, old pictures show a facility that very much resembled those of central and southern Mexico, a visual icon of an imagined community that for the most part was physically absent in the town’s landscape. In fact, photos of the Tijuana of those years show a town that belongs more to the Wild West, as it has been represented in cowboy movies.

3. Beyond the Homeland: The *Perímetros Libres*

The abolition of the Dry Law in the United States produced a crisis in Tijuana, where liquor stores and cantinas represented the city’s main source of income. In an attempt to alleviate this situation, President Abelardo Rodríguez² declared in 1932 the creation of the *Perímetros Libres* (Free Trade Perimeters, FTP). Rodríguez had previously served as governor of Baja California and was familiar with the unique local circumstances that made it necessary to facilitate access to goods. The FTPs allowed

² Abelardo Rodríguez was president of Mexico between 1932 and 1934

the free cross-border passage of machinery, raw materials and manufactured products for the exclusive use of the residents of Tijuana and Ensenada (Piñera, 1983, p.539). They were to be physically marked by a wire fence that clearly separated the population, encouraging immigration to the urban area.

In 1934, President Lázaro Cárdenas³ extended the FTPs to Mexicali, Tecate and San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora. With some restrictions to protect local industries, their creation fostered economic activity in Tijuana, causing the population to double between 1930 and 1940, from 11,271 to 21,977 people (Rivera and Saldaña, 2005). As years went by, the FTPs also favored the growth of a local bourgeoisie that was strongly engaged in intermediary commerce and disengaged from industry, as well as “a great interdependence among the population of both sides of the border, specially regarding consumption habits, social behavior and cultural patterns” (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.94).

With the approval of the FTPs, Tijuana became a de facto exception to Mexico’s economic policies, with a more liberal foreign trade regime than in the rest of the country (Noriega Vertigo, 1982, p.51). This happened at a moment when the federal government was using high import taxes as part of the strategy to recover from the Great Depression (Cárdenas, 1994, p.52). In this context, the FTPs were used as a mechanism to promote capitalist development at the border, as well as a tool to mark the boundaries of the State’s area of influence. However, as I will explain next, the creation of the FTPs was also paired during the *Cardenista* period by other policies

³ Lázaro Cardenas Was president between 1934 and 1940.

directed to connect Tijuana with the south, and disconnect it from the north. In the words of Alejandro Mungaray and Patricia Moctezuma:

It was Cárdenas who, with a strong sense of nationalism and a wide understanding of the importance of establishing the geographical limits of political power, that is of State territoriality, implemented policies designed to populate the border, as a way to protect and expand the national market (Mungaray, 1984, p.94).

4. The Double Edge of Territorial Control and Cross-National Consumption: Expropriations and the Free Zone

Before, during and after Second World War, the relationship between the Baja California border and the Mexican State followed a double sided trajectory, in which the Mexican government asserted its sovereignty and control of its territorial boundaries, while allowing both explicitly and implicitly economic integration of Tijuana with southern California, characterized to a great extent, by cross border consumption.

Cárdenas was the first Mexican president who made an explicit commitment to the territorial integration of Baja California with the rest of Mexico. Right after extending the FTPs, he destined a large sum of money for the construction of a paved road between Tijuana and Ensenada, and also reduced taxes on gas imports. However, his primary concern was with Tijuana's sin city status, devoted to gambling, drinking and prostitution, a heteropia or counter place, to puritan San Diego (Berumen, 2003, pp.109-113).

On July 20, 1935, President Cárdenas ordered the closing of all gambling houses in the country, including the Agua Caliente casino, which had been a landmark of Tijuana and one of the major sources of jobs in town (Piñera, 1983, p.540). In a

symbolically charged decision, Cárdenas turned the Casino into a school, and invited a group of Spanish exiled teachers, recently arrived to Mexico after the Spanish Civil War, to establish themselves in the compound and turn the old facilities into workshops, classrooms and even dormitories for students arriving from remote areas of Baja California.

The closing of the casino represented a major blow for the local economy. Old residents remember it as a crisis. Aida Gálvez, who was born in Tijuana in the late 1920s, vividly recalls this episode in the following conversation:

MM: Do you remember *Cardenismo*?

AG: Of course. It was a crisis for us. It was the main conversation topic in every home. What are we going to do? How are we going to live? It took our jobs away. Everybody received something from the Agua Caliente casino.

Indeed, everybody was uncertain about the future of Tijuana, as unemployment rose, despite the government's effort to employ workers in the construction of infrastructure. At the same time, Charles Kramer, a California Congressman, introduced a bill proposing the purchase of Baja California. Cárdenas then gave a radio message to the nation informing of more measures to effectively improve conditions in those territories. In 1937, he established the *Zona Libre* (Free Trade Zone, FTZ) for the whole peninsula. Aside from being geographically more extended, the FTZ was more liberal than the FTPs (Negrete Mata, 1988, p.37).

In addition to these measures, Cárdenas took a series of initiatives to guarantee Mexican land ownership. First, he nationalized the region's agricultural economy by expropriating the U.S. owned Colorado River Land Company, which until then had been the virtual owner of cotton production in the Mexicali Valley (García Montaña,

1987, pp.8-9). Also, towards the end of his presidential period, in 1940, his administration legally constituted Tijuana as a municipality and ordered that land within the city was to be distributed exclusively among Mexican citizens. Finally, in an effort to link Tijuana and Mexicali with the rest of Mexico, the government also started the construction of the Baja California-Sonora railroad. The railroad was eventually completed in 1947, finally offering an alternative route for travelers and merchandise that would stay in Mexican territory.

The stronger connections between Tijuana and the rest of Mexico enforced nationalistic sentiments among local residents. This sense of belonging manifested, for instance, at the beginning of Second World War, in December of 1942, when, General John Dewitt, sent an infantry division to the peninsula to prevent a possible enemy invasion. As American soldiers deployed along the northern edge of the border, *Tijuanenses* (workers, teachers, and professionals of all kinds) voluntarily organized to fight the perceived invasion. After a meeting between military commanders from both countries, American troops withdrew and it was agreed that Mexican territory would remain under the supervision of Mexican troops. Other types of assistance, including air defense, radar posts, and technical support was in exchange accepted by Mexico from the US army (Taylor, 2001 ,p.28).

The episode of 1942 shows that territorial boundaries were, by that time, very present in the lives and minds of Tijuana residents. However, during the world war, Tijuana was incorporated to the US Quota Coupon Program, and both *Tijuanenses* and San Diegans received the same stamps to obtain food, clothes, shoes and other household items. When I asked an old resident if they used different stamps in San

Diego and Tijuana she replied: “No, we used them here and also those living on the other side. The other side has always been a part of our life. Stamps were used in both countries”.

Because of the proximity to the naval base, the war was felt in Tijuana as vividly as in San Diego. Blackouts extended all the way to Ensenada, and at night, drivers covered their car lights and drove at 30 miles per hour to save gas. At the same time, Tijuana’s cantinas and liquor stores experienced a revival, since the base produced a flow of sailors that poured across the border and crowded Avenida Revolución. Aida Gálvez, who was 15 at the time, remembers that “Many soldiers came here back then, *y se llenaba de pura gringuería*, soldiers, young fellows gathered here to drink. They got drunk. We girls were never allowed to enter Revolución during Second World War”.

At the same time, there was a black market, and many people from both sides of the border, were able to obtain in Tijuana meat, butter, cream and gasoline ration free. Jorge Mosqueda, who made a small fortune smuggling milk, lard, bacon and silk hosiery into Mexico during the war, remembers that:

JM: “I was the king of the land, like a God, because I would bring canned milk, Pet or Carnation”.

MM: So they could not get those in here.

JM: Because we did not have any communication with the interior. We were abandoned by the Mexican government. When I arrived at the marketplace vendors would beg me to leave all my merchandise with them, but I would just leave a tiny bit, and the rest, I distributed among mothers by the dozen. They would beg me to give them an entire box, but I couldn’t. There were many people in need, so many women with small children. In order to bring the merchandise we would make holes on the wire fence or buy the inspectors a big ham for Christmas...which during those war times, it was nearly impossible to find. Most of the stuff we got from both the US and Mexican armies,

and we sold them in Tijuana at twice the price. People would buy it because there was nothing to eat; they only had what they planted in their yards. Every house had a piggy, hens and a little garden.

The World War led to another government decision that also affected population dynamics in Tijuana. In 1942, Mexico concluded the Bracero Agreement with the United States, under which Mexican workers would be allowed to sign temporary contracts with American employers, to labor in the agricultural fields that had been abandoned by those going to war. Even if Tijuana was not one of the designated sites for establishing contracts, it was soon invaded by workers from all parts of Mexico. After securing a job in California, many of those immigrants would bring their families to Tijuana. This influx of people produced a population boom in the city, which grew from 16,486 people in 1940 to 59,962 in 1950.

Right after the world war, a local businessman purchased a couple of airplanes that had been discarded by the army and started air communication, first with Ensenada, Mexicali and La Paz, and eventually with Mexico City. *Mexicana de Aviación*, one of the mainstream airlines in the country, started sending flights to Tijuana in 1947. The first airport was finished in 1948, taking advantage of the infrastructure of the old casino, which had some facilities to receive flights that came from various parts of the world, carrying tourists to the gambling industry. Later in the fifties, the airport was moved to its current location, fostering a more continuous relationship with the interior of Mexico, since the highway that would connect the city by land, was still in construction (Rivera, 2001).

The arrival of southerners intensified with the inauguration of the Sonora-Baja California railroad in 1948 that increased the movement of people and goods, putting

an end to the black market. The new railroad went from Mexicali to Benjamin Hill, where the tracks connected with the rest of Mexico. Mariano Olmos, who arrived to Tijuana as a child in 1952, remembers it was a long and hard trip that took nine days and several train changes from Mexico City. The train was overcrowded with *braceros*, humble peasants who boarded along the way. Along with people, the railroad slowly started transporting goods from the south, although in a limited way.

The *braceros* changed the tone of Tijuana's relationship with the "other side", accentuating the labor component in the already complex transnational border circuit of social and economic connections. At the same time, they brought tastes and habits from their places of origin, planting the seeds of an incipient market of national products that were not known among the locals. "We were not familiar with many vegetables, flowers and dishes. There was also great variety of chiles that started arriving from Mexico" remembers Aída Gálvez. Some traditions, like the day of the dead, also had a late start in Tijuana: "We were not acquainted with the day of the dead celebrations. We used to go to the graveyard but that's it. The rituals were very different."

According to local scholar Antonio Padilla, Mexico's increased presence in Tijuana's urban landscape visually showed, for instance, in the name of restaurants that made reference to the owner's place of origin, like *Carnitas Uruapan*, *El Sinaloense*, *El Seri*. As the city grew, newcomers would establish themselves in *colonias* that changed Tijuana's shape and established new divisions that did not exist before. Some of these *colonias* were named after Mexican heroes, like *Colonia Morelos* or *Pancho Villa*, or episodes of Mexican history, like *Colonia Independencia*.

These names suggest a sense of nationalism and an awareness of the presence of the nation-state, in contrast to streets in downtown Tijuana, numbered as *Calle Primera* (First Street), *Segunda* (Second Street), and so forth, another import from the United States.

After the world war, Mexico refused to sign the La Habana Charter, and did not join the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, GATT, choosing protectionism instead as a source of development (Cárdenas, 1994, p.121). Baja California, however, developed a more open economy and, even if it still focused on commercial activities, Tijuana initiated an industrial development marked by foreign competition, which would later flourish in the seventies and eighties, with maquiladoras. Fernando Manjarrez, a Tijuana industrial pioneer said to me in an interview that “every entrepreneur in Tijuana that started a business, regardless of its size, had to have the concept of international competition in mind”. “I saw it on many occasions”, he said in an interview:

As soon as a product came out in the market, consumers would compare it with what was available in the other side, and choose what was more convenient in terms of quality and price. So there were factories in the other side that replaced their old machinery to obtain a newer one, and sold it to industrials from central Mexico, while the locals would buy it as new as their competitor from the other side, since the U.S. market was closer than the capital.

Indeed, despite the trends of increased connectivity with Mexico that Tijuana experienced during those years, mostly as a result of government policies and immigration, the United States were still geographically and economically closer than Mexico; and, as John Allen says, “authority works through relations of proximity and presence if it is to be effective in drawing people into line on a day-to-day basis. The

more direct the presence, the more intense the impact” (Allen, 2003, p.10). In this sense, it was crucial to bring Tijuana closer to Mexico and to bring Mexico closer to Tijuana.

5. Political and Physical Connectivity: Statehood and Transportation

In the early 1950s, Tijuana had weak economic relations with Mexico, mostly because roads were underdeveloped and insufficient, and goods could not move between producers and consumers. This situation both confirmed and produced a sense of isolation from the rest of the territory and an enormous distance from the nation’s capital. In 1952, however, there were two important events that reflected and produced, both symbolically and materially, a stronger political and physical connectivity with the rest of Mexico: Statehood and the inauguration of the Tijuana-Mexicali highway. These two events contributed to a long-term process of national integration, which reconfigured the boundaries of Tijuana’s market and the geographical linkages with the nation’s capital, as well as the “other side”.

As it was officially announced on the first day of January 1952, Baja California changed its classification as a “Territory” in Mexico’s Constitution, to become a State. One of the most important repercussions of this measure was that, after that moment, the governors of Baja California would now be elected by its residents, rather than appointed by the President of Mexico. This gave Baja Californians a more assertive place in the body of State power, also incorporating them in the political games that, in the absence of true elections, gave shape to the

social contract that enabled the Mexican post-revolutionary regime to legitimize itself (See Meyer and Aguilar, 1991 and Garrido, 1982).

Statehood also allowed the consolidation of regional groups in politics, as well as the economy, allowing the development of a society relatively autonomous with respect to political forces from the center of the country. The treasury of the new state was to keep a portion of the tax revenue, which in the past went to Mexico City in its totality, and state authorities now had some competencies to make decisions about urban infrastructure. This, however, did not benefit Tijuana as much as it did Mexicali, which being the State's capital, concentrated most public investment.

Symbolically, Baja California was now considered a full member of the nation which, in the view of the local historians I interviewed; led to a wave of nationalism as well as the intention of "restoring national values at the border". This was part of a process of ideological territoriality (Yiftachel, 2002, p.218) in which, says Mauricio Tenorio, "Mexican political elites extended the nation beyond individual sentiments and turned it into a collective celebration (...)". Slowly, Mexican cities and towns started representing, or acting the nation in exhibitions, parades, meetings, both local and regional (Tenorio, 2000, pp. 82-83).

In Tijuana, this "national" political etiquette showed, for instance, in the urban scene, where streets previously designated with numbers or letters were now given names of Mexican heroes. Second Street became "Benito Juarez", Fifth Street "Emiliano Zapata", Ninth Street Ignacio Zaragoza, and so on. These names were more familiar to immigrants coming from all parts of Mexico than to old residents, many of whom felt these measures as an imposition. It is interesting, for instance, that Sixth

Street was named after Ricardo Flores Magón, who is often considered a traitor among the locals, but characterized as a hero in the official narrative⁴.

In the United States, says Gary Fields, the railroad and telegraphs reconfigured market boundaries in the United States during the 19th century, which increased urban population and created urban mass markets that changed the pattern of geographical linkages between cities (Fields, 2004, p. 84.) In Tijuana, these flows took place in the mid 20th century, starting with air transportation in 1946, the railroad in 1948, and finally, the Tijuana-Mexicali Highway, inaugurated by President Miguel Alemán⁵ in 1952. Before that year, it took almost a day for buses (known locally as *diligencias*) to go through *La Rumorosa*'s steep and narrow curves, along a dirt road that was both dangerous and slow.

The new highway reduced the physical and imaginary distance between Tijuana and the rest of the nation. It facilitated inter-regional communication between Baja Californian cities, enhancing an unprecedented mobility of people and goods. At the same time, it made possible the transportation of cotton from the Mexicali fields to the port of Ensenada, which reinforced the connection with harbors on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. *Tijuanenses* could now drive to Mexico City (even if the road to the capital was not totally paved until the 1960s) or take the train in Mexicali.

⁴ Ricardo Flores Magón was one of the leaders of the 1911 US based invasion to Baja California. If his intentions were idealistic, to impose an anarchist republic, the locals perceived it as a foreign invasion and his name became associated with those who pursued annexation to the United States. After his defeat in Baja California, Flores Magón joined the Mexican Revolution and eventually became part of the Mexican heroes directory put together by institutional ideologies (See Samaniego, 2007, p.1203-1204).

⁵ Miguel Alemán was President of Mexico between 1946 and 1952.

Once President Alemán inaugurated the highway, says an old resident, “life was very different. We started getting fruits and vegetables from the states of Nayarit and Sonora, and with this Tijuana turned into a fully shaped supplying market” (*Historia Viva*, p.54.). This fact introduced some changes in Jorge Mosqueda’s trade.

When I asked him if the railroad and the highway had an impact on his business:

JM: “Of course, on everybody here”, he replied.

MM: How so?

JM: I will explain you something: There were no Mexican products in here. Only corn, beans and stuff like that. I managed 98 percent of American products. Everything came from there. Now it is different. There are many products coming from Mexico. The railroad brought some Mexican products, although they did not have very good quality, and they came in small amount. The real change came with the trucks. This is when I started bringing products all the way from Oaxaca. I started buying *Nescafé* from the local distributor, but the price was too high, so I asked a truck driver who brought me *piloncillo* and dried chiles from Guadalajara if he could ask for the Nescafé price in Oaxaca. He called me on the phone and gave me a great price. I bought a thousand boxes, and sold them in my store, to the anger of the distributor.

The transit of trucks coming from Mexico transporting loads of goods actually became a metaphor of nationalism in the works of some local writers. Here is what one of them, María Luisa Melo de Remes, wrote about the highway:

The highway is well designed. One must climb the mountains to then go through a beautiful valley. But what I like the most around here is to run into trucks coming from Mexicali transporting cotton to Ensenada, where this white gold will be shipped to Japanese harbors. The State of Baja California is no longer separated from the chore of our motherland. There are also those trailers that bring every hour national merchandise from our whole Republic, and also buses coming from Guadalajara, packed with passengers that wave at us with enthusiasm. “Welcome everybody to this noble and generous Baja Californian land!” (Melo, 1962).

By then, industrial growth, migration, educational expansion, as well as mass production and consumption had turned post-revolutionary Mexico's national *mis en scène*, into a "generalized common sense" (Tenorio, 2000, pp. 82-83)", vastly shared throughout the territory. The case of national fairs in Tijuana, are a good indication of this. As part of the celebrations of becoming a state, Governor Braulio Maldonado organized in 1952 an Industrial Conference that was inaugurated by President Adolfo Ruíz Cortínez⁶. The President suggested the parallel organization of a fair that would exhibit products from southern Mexico.

At that time, there was almost no industry in Tijuana, and those who showed their products in the fair did it more for "political sympathy" or allegiance to the system, than for an interest in profit. According to one of the fair organizers:

More than a real interest of selling, those who came did it to respond to an invitation by the government, and I will tell you why: Mexico's industry was not interested on coming to Baja California, because of the great distance. Our roads were not in good condition, and they had just inaugurated the highway that communicated us with the rest of the country. Before 1952 there was not even a highway that would take us beyond the Colorado River. Industries from the interior sold their products in the interior; they were not interested in Tijuana's small and distant market, because during those years, there were only 60 thousand people living here. At the same time, products sold in the country's interior were not attractive, because they were very expensive and could not compete. Let's not forget that this was a free zone where we could import tax free, all our daily supplies, and there were no problems to cross the border in those times. They would not even ask for a passport because they already knew us. The crossing was quick, so it was more common to go to "the other side" where we found products of a better quality and a lower price than the ones they offered in the interior. More than having an interest in new markets, attendees to that exhibition were merely responding to an invitation by the Minister of Economy and the President.

⁶ Adolfo Ruíz Cortines was President of Mexico from 1952 to 1958.

Indeed, it was clear that efforts to join Tijuana's market with the national economy responded more to political motives than to economic incentives. They indicate a clear State interest in exerting its sovereignty in a land that was dangerously distant and detached. In a country with a long authoritarian tradition, it was by extending such type of "invitations" that the Presidential power of the time intervened to connect the peninsula with the rest of the country.

Later in time, other fairs gained more resonance than the first one. Old resident Jonás Cabrales was born in Tijuana in 1958. He remembers a National fair organized by the *Instituto Nacional de la Juventud* (National Youth Institute) in 1964. His uncle was hired to come from the southern State of Nayarit to paint and decorate the fair signs. "There was a stand for each State of Mexico and they brought many products that caused a commotion....it was magnificent!" he recalls. At this fair there were *artesanos* (crafters) from all parts of Mexico, they served Mexican *antojitos*, tequila from Guadalajara, "*Y la gente*" says Cabrales... "*La gente recordando su terruño*". In fact, nostalgic feelings shared among recent immigrants to Tijuana greatly contributed to create a market for national products.

In the numbers, migration to Tijuana quickly showed. The population grew from 60 thousand in 1950 to 165 thousand people in 1960. As a result, there was a visible difference between the fair of 1952 and the one that took place in 1969, called *Baja California en Marcha*, an international event, of greater dimensions. Tijuana "started getting interesting as a market", said Fernando Manjarrez, in 1965, as the number of Mexicans shopping in the U.S. outpaced that of U.S. citizens who shopped south of the border (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.100, and Tamayo and Tamayo and

Fernandez, 1985, p.87). Mexican travel expenditures abroad reached 628 million dollars, a 19.4 increase from the previous year (Martis, 1970, p.4).

At the same time, many of those recent immigrants did not have passports and did not share the habit of crossing the border that old residents had. Even if they were moving to a border city, people who established themselves in Tijuana did not automatically or necessarily incorporate the United States into their mental map. More than a place for shopping, they saw the “other side” as a site of work, where they might eventually move and find a job.

In Manjarrez’s words:

The city started growing with those waves of immigrants coming from the interior. What happened? A high percentage of those people were not eligible (at least immediately) for a passport⁷. The population started growing, as well as the percentage of residents without a passport. Many of them came without documents, and even if those with a passport also increased, the growing proportion of people with no passport created an internal market, which favored the proliferation of grocery and clothes stores, followed by shopping centers, department stores, supermarkets and so on.

There were always some people who could not go to the United States. Aside from recent immigrants, poor in their majority, some of them were deportees, or people who owed taxes north of the border. With the beginning of the Vietnam War, there were also young men who, being born in the United States, eluded the draft and preferred to avoid crossing the border. In Manjarrez’s view those consumers had nurtured the small-scale commerce that sold at a somewhat higher price in the city, and they also relied on family, neighbors and friends to do their *mandado* for them.

⁷ People in Tijuana use the word passport instead of visa, as if exiting the country was a synonym for entering the United States.

6. The Institutions and Networks Of Mexico's Imagined Community: National Television and the Nationalization of the Electric Industry

In 1953, Mexican Television Czar, Emilio Acárraga, installed Channel 6 in Tijuana. This station targeted English speaking audiences across the border, and it only transmitted three hours of Spanish programming a day. Three years later, in 1955, the three hours of Spanish were eliminated from the programming as Channel 6 became part of ABC, in the United States. They transmitted in English to English speaking audiences until 1973, when a San Diego local channel, Channel 39, won a law-suit that granted it exclusive rights of transmission of ABC programming, arguing that Channel 6 was a “foreign channel”. Channel 6 then worked as an independent station until Fox Television Networked purchased it in 1986 (Ojeda, 2003). Tijuana was not considered important enough as a market for a television station until 1960, when Televisa established Channel 12, the first channel that transmitted in Spanish, which finally connected local audiences to the national television network (Zermeño, 2000).

By the time Channel 12 was established, there were already 165 thousand people living in Tijuana, a significant amount of immigrants from other parts of Mexico who did not speak English and were not familiar with American television content. By then, urban growth had reached the areas of La Mesa (south) and Playas de Tijuana, a middle class suburb that was established right by the ocean. Until then, the coast had indeed been openly ignored by urban planners and developers who instead had oriented the city's growth towards the international border.

The expansion to other areas was facilitated by the fact that, seven years earlier (in 1953) the government had started building the Tijuana-Ensenada Scenic Highway, which made communications between both cities significantly easier, and also linked Tijuana with harbors in the Mexican Pacific coast, like Mazatlán and Acapulco. So as the new immigrants materialized with their presence the Mexican nation bringing tastes, consumption habits and frames of reference, the city of Tijuana had also started growing in directions other than the port of entry. It had started looking south.

In this context, channel 12 was to play a significant role in connecting audiences to Mexican pop culture, bringing shows that broadcasted nationally, such as *Siempre en Domingo* (Always on Sunday), the axis of Mexican pop culture. Along with the singers and interviews with celebrities that appeared in the show, there was a segment that each time featured a different Mexican city, praising local cultures, crafts, cuisine and attractions that made national audiences acquainted with all the corners of the nation, through their television set. Furthermore, *Siempre en Domingo*'s conductor Raúl Velasco became a national legend in showbusiness, instrumental in the launching of celebrities (actors and singers) manufactured by Televisa for audiences in Mexico and Latin America (See Trejo Delarbre, 1988).

In the words of Samuel Cuevas:

SC-Programs started presenting, like in the case of *Siempre en Domingo*, faces of Mexico that we did not know. At the same time, a show about Zacatecas would have great resonance, since there were many people from that state living here in Tijuana, and there you had identification with their folklore, their products, so merchants from Zacatecas started bringing those products to Tijuana.

MM: They didn't before.

SC: Immigrants became distributors of products that we couldn't obtain here before, products that came from the provinces and that

made us miss our hometowns. We hadn't been exposed to Manila mangos, and you can now find them pretty frequently, *chico zapote*, *mamey*, avocado from Michoacán, from Nayarit. Television programming brought us that identification, like the *sones jarochos*, me being from Veracruz, you would say look there that is my land! We remembered what we had, what we wanted to preserve.

MM. And this was when Televisa installed Channel 12 and incorporated it to the national network.

SC: Yes, aside from the business and profit aspects, even if in a small scale, they also disseminated and offered culture, even if publicity exists because it is good for businesses, and firms need to make a profit.

Channel 12 started with very limited programming (between 4 and 11 pm) which included Mexican movies, American dubbed movies, *telenovelas* and some local shows. For nearly two decades it was the only Spanish-speaking television channel in the city, since the next one, Channel 33, was not established until 1980. Channel 33 became part of Telemundo-CNN in 1990, and its local content was very limited. Finally, in the same year, 1990, Televisa opened channel 57, which transmits the content of Channel 2 in southern Mexico. By then, Tijuana's population was already more than a million (1,110,140 people).

In addition to offering programs in Spanish, and connecting local audiences to mainstream popular culture, Channel 12 broadcasted publicity for products manufactured in the south, but that were not available in local markets. As Mexican businesses purchased advertisement spots in arrangements that included the whole nation, their products made themselves present in the screens of Tijuana audiences, even if they were not available in the stores. When I interviewed Marina Gutierrez, we remembered together an old TV ad of *Shampoo Caprice*, a national brand that plagued the nation with publicity during the early seventies. Despite being exposed to

the publicity of this product, Marina had never seen it in a store, because it was introduced in Tijuana's market years later.

As I will elaborate later in this chapter, this coincides with manifestations of acceptance of national products during those years. According to Samuel Cuevas, even if those products were not offered in the local market, people started demanding them, either because they were recent immigrants and had the habit of using them before arriving to Tijuana, or due to curiosity, because of the television ads. I will later explain how, after the devaluations of the seventies and eighties, curiosity turned into necessity, which finally consolidated a demand for national products. In Cuevas' words:

Merchants started facing the necessity of supplying this market, which was now a lot easier given the fact that there were highways that connected us to the south. So for instance, *Bimbo* established a plant in the area, and many industries slowly established themselves here in the seventies, to avoid transportation costs. This was easier with the industrial parks the government built, which provided with infrastructure to establish an industry. Not only roads, but also, for instance, electricity.

In 1960, the same year that Spanish-speaking television arrived to Tijuana, President Adolfo López Mateos nationalized the electric industry, to prevent the perceived risks that foreign ownership posed to national sovereignty. During this year, the government started to centralize the already existing Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE, Federal Electricity Commission). At that point, Tijuana imported energy from San Diego, through a local company from the South Bay plant, which used a power line that connected it to the city's network across the international border.

After the industry was nationalized, President López Mateos started the construction of a thermoelectric plant in Rosarito that was inaugurated in 1963. The inauguration of this plant provided an effective source of electricity for the entire region that fulfills, to the day, practically all needs. The plant was essential for later governments to plan the construction of industrial parks and the maquiladora boom of the 1970s. And, even now, when the provision of these types of services has visibly run short in Tijuana, electricity is usually supplied even to remote and impoverished areas, as opposed to other services like water, sewer, or gas. In Tijuana, the nationalization of the electric industry embodied a radical reorganization of people's connectivity with the institutions of the Mexican corporate state. According to Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin "Infrastructure networks provide the distribution grids and topological connections that link systems and practices of production with systems and practices of consumption" (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.11). So, if we think of the State as an infrastructural network, the nationalization of the electric industry incorporated Tijuana residents into that network⁸.

If the measure did not represent any substantial change to the price or service of gas supply, it is significant that, as opposed to the previous local company that did the billing in dollars, CFE charged in Mexican pesos, which was a novelty for local residents. According to Samuel Cuevas, who is a veteran of the electric industry in

⁸ In the case of the electric industry, it must be noted that, for strategic reasons, electricity networks in Mexico's borders are not physically connected to the national network. This was done on purpose so that border networks can sell electricity to the United States, and the same is done in the southern border. However, even if not physically connected, the fact that electricity generation and distribution is owned and ran by CFE, just like in the rest of the country, makes a difference in the patterns of connectivity between consumers and suppliers as opposed to the times in which electricity was imported from San Diego and owned by a private company.

Tijuana: “Tijuanenses accepted the incorporation to the national electric industry, as one more feature of nationality, of identity.” After all, say Graham and Marvin, infrastructure networks are strongly involved in structuring and delineating the experiences of urban culture, or what Raymond Williams called the “structures of feeling of urban life” (Quoted in Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.12).

Indeed, electricity supply became understood as a social service (Bendix, 1977), provided by the State to fulfill the social rights that are part of the contractual relationship between government and citizens, within the limits of a given territory (Béjar and Capello, p.12). Social rights, Says T.H Marshal, turn difference into a homogenous body of citizens (Marshall, 1999, p.19.) During our interviews, Samuel Cuevas recalled that “the centralization of the electric industry eliminated price disparities among different companies, and resolved the problem of private companies which would not provide electricity to poor areas. The government saw electricity as a right and a social service that the State must supply”.

The nationalization of the electric industry was a step in a process that occurred in England during the last half of the XIX century, in which “production, distribution, and consumption became gradually reconstituted on mass industrial scales” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.40). In Tijuana, this took place a century later, when consumers experienced “centralized control, coordination and diversification (...) which required the construction of national systems of interconnected highways, rail, communications, energy infrastructure, bringing the urban infrastructural ‘islands’ into a radically new era of regulated interconnection and extension” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.40.)

Along with the CFE, other national institutions like PEMEX arrived to Tijuana during the same years. PEMEX offered car owners with the alternative of purchasing Mexican gasoline. I have pointed out in a previous chapter how the habit of crossing the border to pour gas is well established among Tijuanaenses, for whom the border offers the possibility of choosing between different brands, whereas in the rest of Mexico PEMEX operates as a government monopoly since the oil industry was expropriated by President Cárdenas on March 18, 1938, which is still today, a national holiday.

7. Economic Policies of Integration: Centrally Planned Border Development

As I have mentioned, the Free Zone fostered in Tijuana, as well as in the rest of Baja California, an industry that was subordinated to commerce and services, which made it hard for the region to keep up with the ISI progressive model dictated by ECLEC⁹. In 1950, commercial activities represented 74.1 of total state GDP (Garcia Montaño, 1987, p.13). At the same time, transportation infrastructure in Baja California started reconfiguring market boundaries in Tijuana, proving a base for the State to engage in more decisive policies that would integrate the peninsula into its web.

At the peak of economic nationalism, cross-border consumption was seen as a problem because it represented the loss of a space for Mexican products to circulate. There were concerns about the existence of a market, within national territory, that was “strongly dependent on the capital reproduction cycles of US capitalism” without

⁹ Economic Commission for Latin America, CEPAL in its Spanish acronym.

achieving the same industrial development. As I mentioned early in the chapter, this situation had instead promoted the development of an intermediary bourgeoisie and the proliferation of commercial activities in the region (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984 p.89).

As Tijuana's market gained importance, policy makers were more interested on recovering the resources that were being "filtered" to the north through cross-border shopping. They believed that if those resources stayed, it would increase employment and revenue in the south (Tamayo and Fernández, 1985, p.16). In 1972, it was calculated that spending on the northern side of the border fluctuated between 599 and 740 million dollars. The total amounts for the San Diego area fluctuated between 139.4 and 146 million dollars (Tamayo and Fernández, 1983, p.107.) For the nation's balance of payments, analysts of the time argued that these informal transactions amounted for a fourth of the nation's total imports (Tamayo and Fernández, 1983, p.107.)

Cross-border consumption, however, was recognized to be beneficial for the border population. In the words of local scholars Alejandro Mungaray and Patricia Moctezuma: "Mexican border residents have access to American goods and services, which are offered under better conditions than the national. With this, their income levels improve, as they have access to goods that under normal conditions would be impossible to obtain" (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.97.)

One of the primary concerns was then to incorporate the border economy into the ISI model that prevailed in the rest of Mexico. In order to accomplish this, there was a need to find mechanisms through which national products could substitute for

imports at the border. In this context, the government launched, in 1961, the *Programa Nacional Fronterizo* (National Border Program, PRONAF). PRONAF was an open manifestation of State intervention with the objective of nationalizing the market by connecting Tijuana consumers with Mexico's producers. It represented the first plan of economic, political and cultural integration (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1988, p.235).

In fact, it was recognized that one of the main obstacles to achieve the presence of national products in local markets was cultural, since, as Mungaray and Moctezuma point out "imported products was part of the daily life of border consumers" (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1988, 235), aside from the fact that, in economic terms, Mexican products were not-competitive. Under these conditions, PRONAF was initially destined to facilitate the means to incorporate local economies to national economies. It started with large investments in infrastructure to "modify physical conditions in border cities" (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.99). There were also fiscal incentives for national producers to send products to the border, by eliminating profit taxes and discounting transportation fees to those who accepted to send products to the border. As a result, the 434 million pesos that circulated in border markets in 1960 increased to 1,595 in 1965. National Industries started making profit from sending merchandise to the border

PRONAF was followed in 1965 by the *Programa de Industrializacion Fronteriza* (Border Industrialization Program, PIF), which coincided with the end of the Bracero Agreement in the same year and had the purpose of taking advantage of the availability of labor this would entail. PIFs objectives were then to create new

jobs, foster modern manufacture and the consumption of Mexican raw materials. This marked the beginning of the maquiladora industry. Maquiladoras were allowed to establish in the border area, provided they would export 100 per cent of their production and they would not compete with Mexican exports (Negrete Mata, 1988, p.42). Maquiladoras grew very fast, in part because, despite the efforts, it was really hard for industry inputs to come from the interior, and the ties with the north prevailed in industrial development.

At the same time, local governments gave impulse to second hand commerce that would take advantage of used merchandise in fair condition that had been discarded by American consumers, and that improved the living conditions of border residents. This is when the famous *Segundas* (thrift stores) became common, giving birth to what is now called an *economía de desecho* (economy of waste, Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.100).

This is a clear example of how Mexico did not have the productivity or distribution capabilities that would be capable of bringing national products to the border market. With this, demand for American products prevailed (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.102). However, those who came from the south also brought the memories of products from the south. While other parts of the nation were united in the consumption of national brands like *Bimbo* (baked products), all Tijuans knew was Wonder bread. However, those who arrived from the south also brought the memory of taste and eventually became distributors of those products. In the world of flavor, Helena Martínez, Aida Gálvez's daughter, has it very clear:

HM-I can tell you that here, you can go to a *tianguis* (open air market) and there are many people who have their little stands that come from Mexico. Those are the ones who buy *paletas Mimí*, *picorricos*, all the *chilitos* products, that we did not eat here before. That fusion of *chilito* and *acidito* was not ours; we were more inclined for the salty stuff we found in Chinese stores.

MM-This is very interesting. So *chilito* and *acidito* were not from here.

HM-No. Tamarinds and all that stuff, no.

MM- So how was the salty stuff from the Chinese stores.

HM-Salty dried plums, that would sell in stores like *La Formosa* or *La China Libre* or in the markets. Chinese products, even the package.

MM-And those were kid's candy.

HM. Salty sweet and sour.

MM: So how about *Gansitos* and other *Marinela* products?

HM: None. Here we had twinkies and cupcakes, doughnuts and cookies. Those elephant-shaped cookies with rainbow sprinkles were totally unknown around here. When I visit friends from the interior in their houses and I see those cookies.... Yuk! We only knew *galletas gringas*.

ISI started showing signs of exhaustion towards the early 1970s (Negrete Mata, 1988, p. 34), which coincided with the arrival of Luis Echeverría to power¹⁰. In this context, the federal government turned its attention to the expansion of Baja California as industrial base, as a way to balance intermediary commerce and help Mexican products to invade the market. Echeverría introduced a series of plans to bring industry to the region and gave impulse to the maquiladora industry, through fiscal incentives, infrastructure building and the construction of industrial parks.

In the early 1970s, the government launched the *Programa de Comercialización Fronteriza* (Border Commercialization Program, PCF) with the objective of integrating the region to the rest of the country through the “conquest of its market”. One of the main obstacles this new program faced was indeed

¹⁰ Luis Echeverría was president of Mexico between 1970 and 1976.

consumption patterns at the border, which were enhanced by the free zone. Also, Echeverría expanded these programs, with the purpose of promoting industrialization and regional development, cheap infrastructure, subsidized input for the industry, as well as a tax return policy for products that were sold in border markets (Negrete, 1988, p.12).

Along with other “subprograms”¹¹ these policies gave 10 year subsidies to those businesses which accepted to sell their products at the border and had a 100 percent of Mexican capital. The federal government also introduced a subprogram known as *artículos gancho* (hook articles), which consisted in allowing business owners to import certain goods, and displaying them in local establishments along with national products that would be sold at a competitive price (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.102). Finally, as I will illustrate more thoroughly at the end of the chapter, there was also a policy that promoted the construction of shopping centers in border cities and they gave fiscal subsidies and reduced transportation fees for industries that came to the region with the idea of altering local import patterns (Negrete, 1988 p. 39.)

There was also awareness that industry needs plenty of labor, and given the fact that Tijuana’s economy offered better salaries than in the rest of the interior, the city became a very powerful population magnet. Indeed, Tijuana’s population more than doubled between 1960 and 1970 from 165,000 to 340,583. Spatially, the city expanded, between 1950 and 1970, into a ring 5 kilometers wider that, according to

¹¹ There were also other subprograms designed to eliminate foreign capital from the agricultural industry and to regulate the maquiladora industry.

local experts, reflected not only demographic increases but also an economic base more solidly based on local demand (Ranfla and Álvarez, 1988, p.260). High salaries also favored the proliferation of a diverse group of capital intensive industries, most of them transnational corporations, leaving out less efficient national industries (Negrete Mata, 1988, P.13.)

These changes took shape in urban development first with the establishment in 1972 of an industrial park in Otay, located at the east of the city, and second, with the remodeling of the downtown area, which will be explored separately later in this chapter. The new industrial park, which was given the name of *Nueva Tijuana*, started housing maquiladora plants in 1977. *Nueva Tijuana* became the spatial facilitator for Echeverría's policies of industrial decentralization, which intended to consolidate industrial activities at the border region as a way to integrate it to the national economy (Negrete Mata, 1988, p. 11). As its name would tell us, this huge infrastructure project did mark the beginning of a new Tijuana, since it was then that Tijuana's position in the international division of labor as a supplier of cheap labor became established. With these moves, the San Ysidro port of entry would no longer be considered as the "center" of town, and the one day visits of foreign tourists to *Avenida Revolución* started moving down in the priority list of Tijuana's income sources.

8. The Territories of Currency: Monetary Integration and the Peso Devaluation

According to Gary Fields, we can think of markets as territories, with boundaries that are defined by costs to and capacity of market actors to exchange

goods and services over distance, and communicate information needed to negotiate exchanges, (Fields, 2004, 69). Another element that defines the boundaries of a market is currency, which in Tijuana, proved to be a useful integration tool, an instrument of State territoriality. Despite the series of efforts that were carried out throughout half a century to connect border markets to Mexico, Tijuana residents in the early 1970s still manifested strong preferences for purchasing goods in “the other side”. During that year, they poured in San Diego 93.3 million dollars (See Table 6). Policies like the *artículos gancho* did not show the expected results, because the program did not come with adequate supply and commercialization mechanisms for national products at the border, and many continued consuming American items (Negrete Mata, 1988, pp. 41-47). Additionally, as I mentioned before, policies designed to support industrial development in the region ended up favoring transnational corporations, which could compete in a market shaped according to the standards of the US economy.

Another reason why Mexican products were not being effectively sold at the border, and that Mexican industries were not so successful was the fact that the Mexican peso had become significantly overvalued in a local economy where the US dollar was the *de facto currency*, which contributed to a growing deficit in the balance of payments. Indeed, the country was at the time experiencing galloping inflation, and the foreign debt had doubled between 1974 and 1976 (Cárdenas, 1996, pp.95-106), which pushed the government to devalue the peso in 1976 from 12.50 pesos per dollar to 24.00. This measure was catastrophic to the border economy, since it was during Echeverría’s period that Tijuana residents had started receiving their salaries in pesos.

These two policies, which abruptly introduced an increasingly weak Mexican peso in the local economy, were finally successful in directing local consumption towards Mexican goods, making them unexpectedly competitive. Before the 1976 devaluation, it was estimated that Mexican border workers spent between 40 and 60 percent of their income in the United States. These figures decreased to 29 percent after the devaluation (Tamayo and Fernandez, 1983, p.103). But people still preferred American products. In the words of a marketer of the time:

Even when the brands are the same, people prefer the ones with a U.S. label. But why buy Del Monte in San Diego when we have Del Monte in Mexico, and even at a cheaper price? I used to do market studies in stores in Nogales, half of which had national competition, like napkins, toilet paper, instant coffee, powder drinks, and jello. Only with the devaluation did people start buying national products (Revista del Consumidor, 1981, quoted in Bilbao, 1995, p.44).

Particularly at the beginning, many *Tijuanenses*, mostly from the middle classes, had to make their way to local stores for the first time, finding and discovering “new” products that would be more affordable for their pockets. It was then “for the first time in border history, that commerce was invaded by Mexican products” (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.105). However, the low value of the peso was soon balanced out by inflation, and retail spending on the north side of the border increased from 353 million dollars in 1977 to 407 million in 1978 (Economic Research Bureau, 1979, p.8).

It was at this time when many of my middle class interviewees who were born in the late sixties and early seventies drink Mexican milk for the first time, since many were only familiar with American brands. This change actually marked the identity of a generation that, unlike its predecessors, grew up with Leche Jersey, the local brand

which incidentally, was packaged by the gallon in the same plastic containers as in the United States. In the rest of Mexico milk was sold in one liter cardboard containers. Perhaps more than any other product, milk became for many families the symbol of a change, what people of that generation remember of the 1976 peso devaluation. Many had to adjust to the taste, learn to like it, and in the collective memory of middle class Tijuana, the change in milk consumption symbolized the end of the good days, the beginning of economic hardship, inflation, and the struggle to survive in an economy where housing prices and rents were still in dollars, but wages were given in pesos.

In the words of an old resident:

Before the 1976 devaluation, there were only dollars around here, no national currency, and they only sold stuff from the other side. Life used to be cheaper here. A kilo of potatoes would cost three pennies and a gallon of milk six pennies. And when Mexican currency appeared, my husband used to say: *Ay vieja*, I may be very Mexican but I don't like our currency... We suddenly could not make ends meet (Historia Viva, 1996, p.19).

Indeed, the devaluation increased the sales of national products, without really improving Mexico's production capacity, which benefitted businesses from southern Mexico but negatively affected disposable income among workers at the border, and therefore their quality of life. Reorientation of border consumption towards national products was done by coercion, through monetary policies that had a devastating impact on border worker's purchasing power, increasing inequality in a society that, as I discussed in the first chapter, was visibly more egalitarian than others in southern Mexico (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.107).

These changes were traumatic for local residents, not only regarding their economies, but also because they suddenly had to break with the old habit of handling American currency, and enter the unknown territory of a highly unstable and fluctuating Mexican peso; learn about its value and how to translate it in the market of goods. This process of integration represented, according local historian Leobardo Sarabia, the entrance in an “uncertain way of life with few points of reference for borderlanders”. As I mentioned earlier, crossing the border to shop had become part of a way of life. In 1970, Kenneth Martis wrote that although many goods and services were now available in Tijuana that were not available years before, “many Mexicans still cross because they have become ‘accustomed’ to this lifestyle. They have gotten used to the taste of certain food, quality and service or patronizing a certain establishment, so they continue to do so” (Martis, 1970, p.56).

In fact, one should never underestimate people’s resilience when it comes to maintaining their way of life. Already by 1979, when inflation had leveled up prices, a survey showed that 44% of border consumers declared they preferred to buy in San Diego, mostly because products were cheaper across the border; they had better quality and a greater variety (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.105). Another reason why they preferred to buy in San Diego had to do with the fact that until the mid 1980s, Tijuana residents were also eligible for credit with U.S. financial institutions. Indeed, in 1980, a study revealed that 60 percent of San Ysidro’s retail shoppers were people who lived in Tijuana who crossed on average once a week to buy primarily groceries, but also clothes and other items (See Table 6). According to this study, 42%

of Tijuana residents went to San Diego at least once a month to obtain supplies for their households (Musbach, 1980, p.1).

A partial recovery of the Mexican economy due to an increase in oil prices revalued the Mexican peso, which allowed a new increase in border imports. However, a second devaluation happened in 1982, in the context of a severe economic crisis considered a catastrophic year for the border economy (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.110). The Peso decreased in value from 24 to almost 47 pesos to the dollar and shortly after that to 115 pesos to the dollar (Cárdenas, 1996, 114). In addition to the devaluation, the government nationalized the banks and established controls for currency exchange.

Both the devaluation and the currency exchange controls seriously affected Tijuana's consumers, who made their salaries in pesos but had to consume in dollars as well as intermediary commerce, which as we have mentioned, had significant weight in the local economy. At the same time, local stores were still understocked, national products were not available in the numbers they were needed, and were often purchased in large amounts by American consumers and re-sold in open air markets in San Ysidro, Chula Vista and San Diego (Bilbao, 1995, p.31).

This is when local businessmen like Jorge Mosqueda stopped importing US products, and opened a store that sold exclusively merchandise from Mexico. It was also then, during the late 1970s and early 1980s that, parallel to a process of urban development that I will describe in the next section, Mexican supermarkets became present in Tijuana's landscape. As it shows in the following dialogue with Helena

Martínez, who was in her early twenties during that time, acceptance among local consumers was gradual:

HM: National supermarkets like *Comercial Mexicana* did not come until the late seventies or early eighties. First we had *Blanco*, after the sale of *Mercados Limón*, which were local. It did not work.

MM: Why?

HM: They only had Mexican stuff. You cannot sell here things like *Kitchen Fair* or *Andrea*¹², it doesn't work here like it works with people from the interior, because here you can go to the other side and buy a super brand, in stores or warehouses you can buy Charles David shoes for twenty dollars, or you go to Marshalls and you buy signature clothes, or whatever. So they sold *Mayonesa McCormick*¹³ Yak! You've got to be kidding; people did not even know it, if we grew up with *Best Food*.

This started changing towards the eighties. In 1982, they brought *Noche Buena* cheese, *Parma* ham, that competed with the Vons ham that was getting more and more expensive, but they had to do many demonstration and distributed lots of free samples, until people started saying, hey! *Parma* tastes a lot better.

MM: It was hard for them to sell those brands?

HM: Well, it was hard for us too, but we HAD to do it, because of the price we stopped crossing (the border).

Indeed, growing demand for national products at the border generated an unexpected market, which attracted capital from the interior of Mexico to the border. This is what explains the establishment of supermarkets, like *Blanco* a national department store which, as Helena Martínez confirmed, absorbed the locally owned *Limón* stores. Along with those businesses, State owned chains, like CONASUPO, which supplied subsidized basic products for the working class, were installed in Tijuana in 1982. Other stores from Monterrey (*Astra*) and Sinaloa (*Ley*) also made their way into the border market. (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1988, p.243). This way,

¹² A Mexican shoe brand.

¹³ McCormick was Produced in Mexico since 1945. Best Food was unknown in Mexican Markets.

connectivity to the nation took place not only in the sphere of the market, but also as national capital penetrated the local economy.

Paralell to the arrival of national chains, local supermarket chains like *Calimax*, grew and proliferated in the city. *Calimax* was founded by the Fimbres, a well known local family, previous owners of the emblematic store *La Zona Libre*, which changed its name to *Calimax* in 1960, in a symbolically charged decision by the owner, who considered the political climate for a store with that name was past due (Fimbres, 2006, p.4). *Calimax* followed the model of supermarkets in the United States, with modern and clean facilities, as well as a large parking lot. In 1979, *Calimax* inaugurated a huge supermarket in *Zona Río*, which according to its owner “came to change the city’s face and created the new, modern Tijuana”.

9. Urban Planning and Cultural Territoriality: The *Zona Río* and the Construction of CECUT

According to Larry Herzog, national cultures impose order on the built environments of cities by shaping them in a manner that embodies the values and beliefs of a society (Herzog, 1990, p.6). In Tijuana, efforts by the federal government to regulate and control urban development in Tijuana started in 1962, with the formation of the Comision Mixta del Desarrollo Urbano Fronterizo (Border Urban Development Commission), composed by representatives of the State of Baja California, PRONAF, and other local authorities. The Commission elaborated a *Plan Regulador de Tijuana* (Tijuana Regulation Plan), which was unsuccessful in foreseeing the city’s accelerated urban development, but set a precedent for the 1977 *Plan Municipal de Desarrollo Urbano* (Urban Development Municipal Plan, a subsidiary of

another one that took place nationally) which established patterns of population distribution and development (Padilla, 2007.) Both plans represented the State efforts to control urban development in the city that was by then out of control because of accelerated growth and shape the city's landscape according to its visual and economic logic.

During the 1970s, the federal government also carried on major infrastructure works in Tijuana that were part of a comprehensive remodeling plan to modernize and organize urban life. The plan included the canalization of the Tijuana River, to prevent floods during the rainy season. It allowed the government to include a vast strip of land development on the southwest side of the Tijuana River, what we know now as *Zona Río*, in an urban design that included government buildings, avenues and streets, housing areas, offices, and a gigantic shopping center that was to be called *Plaza Río*.

The first stage of the project started in 1972, under the supervision of the Ministry of National Patrimony (SEPANAL for its Spanish acronym). In order for it to proceed, authorities had to previously "clean" the big slum of Cartolandia, its 633 residents relocated to a housing development (Padilla, *Desarrollo...*). This development signaled "the birth of the new Tijuana" (Bustamante, 1992, p.489). It gave the city, said Samuel Cuevas, a "cleaner better face to the area. It improved the image of Tijuana, identifying it with the center of the republic, reminding us that the government had not abandoned us, that we did not have to move elsewhere because we could do it comfortably here. It was as if Mexico's modernity finally arrived to Tijuana".

Indeed, the new plan attempted to replicate in Zona Río the urban image of a Mexican city, in what was called by one of my informants as a massive showcase of institutional architecture. Its main avenue, which was called *Paseo de los Héroes*, was designed following the model of the French Boulevard, very much like Mexico City's emblematic *Paseo de la Reforma*, with roundabouts where they vowed to place sculptures of Mexican heroes¹⁴. This model, that was made popular during the Nineteenth century and originally designed for carriages that moved at 18 km per hour, caused plenty of traffic accidents until Tijuana drivers became accustomed. In the words of Samuel Cuevas:

We see the copies of Mexico in the roundabouts, typical of Mexico city. US cities don't have them, they have bridges, and they represent a problem for those who don't know how to circulate in that kind of traffic, they become a bottleneck that hinders circulation. In Mexico city, it is not a problema, those on the right keep on the right, and so on, but when they arrived here in Tijuana, they caused many problems.

In 1975, an *ad hoc* Mexican firm started a feasibility study for the Plaza Río shopping center, over a 150 square meter piece of land, located at the south of the international port of entry. Construction started in 1978. Plaza Río became the most important shopping center in northwestern Mexico. It housed nationally prestigious stores, like *Fábricas de Francia*, *Dorian's* as well as some transnationals, like Sears, with the purpose of “not only substituting imports but promoting import of products that in the past were purchased in the USA” (Centro Comercial, 1979.) With this, there was an intention to retain resources that were being transferred to the United States, with cross border shopping. The Project was done by a group of Mexican

¹⁴ Later on, out of an exchange with the US government, they also installed a statue of Abraham Lincoln.

entrepreneurs who owned shopping centers in other parts of the country, which required the use of a hundred percent Mexican capital.

Zona Río opened at a time when devaluations made it affordable for *Tijuanenses* to buy, and Latino US residents to come to Tijuana in search of products that were familiar to them, at a very reduced price. According to Samuel Cuevas, it was at that time also that big Mexican branches like *Bimbo* or *Suavitel* established plants in locations that were closer to the border, with the intention of supplying the border market. The importance of *Zona Río* in establishing a connecton between Tijuana and the rest of the country was made clear to me by Mr. Cervantez-Pérez, who has worked as a journalist and a college professor in the city for over four decades: CP: *Plaza Río* came to be, in the eighties, a very attractive commercial center. I had never seen that. It had a lot of success, it concentrated people, due to a high movement in transportation and communication as well, they started coming down from their colonias, and migrants would show up during the weekend. Fortunately, we kept Mercado Hidalgo, since new comers are always looking for markets, Mexican products they miss. I always tell my anthropology students: “migrants load their backpacks with their language and their traditions, their food, their taste, they don’t forget that”. So there you go, Comercial Mexicana was careful enough to bring national products, even if it is designed like American super markets.

As industry diversified, the city also started developing in the peripheries, facilitated by an urban transportation system and the construction of infastructure. Industrial activity also increased its participation in the economy *vis à vis* the tertiary sector, which nourished the industrial park we previously mentioned. With this active intervention in the landscape, the State pushed irregular dwellings to the south of the city and the port of entry was no longer considered the “center of town” (Ranfla and Alvarez, 1988, p.262). Indeed, *Zona Río* became the new commercial downtown. Aside from *Plaza Río*, local markets, like *Mercado Hidalgo*, offered products from all parts of Mexico, like *pitayas*, and Mexican candy, that weere not known among old residents.

I have mentioned in this dissertation that territoriality is much more than a strategy for control of space as it is better understood as implicating and being implicated in ways of thinking, acting and being in the world (Delaney, 2005, p.8). In the case of Tijuana, the exercise of State territoriality went beyond the design of urban plans that replicated notions of “the Mexican” in the urban landscape, or infrastructure that embodied and facilitated the physical presence of the State. The Río Zone also projected ideologies that were present at the time, expressed for instance, in the fact that the main streets of Zona Río were named after characters of Mexican contemporary history like Diego Rivera, Jaime Torres Bodet, and José María Velasco.

In terms of ideology, it is important to emphasize that the projects I mentioned above coexisted with a nationalistic wave supported by discourses and state policies of guidance and intervention. These trends identified the border as a major source of concern and, in 1976 President José López Portillo¹⁵ organized in Tijuana a meeting where they evaluated the “country’s cultural quality”. This was part of a cultural nationalism campaign that intended to “protect the mexican border region from imperialist infiltration” (Monsivais, 1978, p. 52). It led to the construction, in 1982, of the Tijuana Cultural Center (CECUT), precisely at *Zona Río*, a huge building devoted to the promotion of art and culture, designed by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, who was considered by many an “architect of the system”¹⁶.

In fact, CECUT’s bulding has been compared to colonial missions, a cultural fortress that brings (Mexican) “civilization” to the borderlands. In Sarabia’s view it

¹⁵ José López Portillo was president of Mexico between 1976 and 1982.

¹⁶ Among other projects, Ramírez Vázquez was responsible for the design of the National Museum of Anthropology, *Estadio Azteca*, and the Tlatelolco Tower, which for decades housed the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (Foreign Affairs Ministry).

represents the “spiritual advance of the federal government that imports to the border cultural products manufactured in the South” since Tijuana was considered an “orphan of the mother culture”. The idea was to introduce in Tijuana what he calls Mexico’s “manual of identities” or, in the words of Mauricio Tenorio, “Mexico’s symbolic arsenal” (Tenorio, 2000, p.13). Also in 1982, two other cultural institutions made their way to Tijuana. El *Colegio de la Frontera Norte* (COLEF), a think tank that was subsidiary of *El Colegio de Mexico*¹⁷ in Mexico City, and *Universidad Iberoamericana*¹⁸, of Jesuit ownership, which also had its main branch in Mexico city. Particularly COLEF promoted the publication of vast array of academic works, a number of which addressed issues of sovereignty and identity at the border.

10. Conclusion

According to David Delaney, territoriality is an expression of power that is also implicated in the creation, circulation and interpretation of meaning. It is therefore in the connection between space, power and meaning that we can substantiate the concept of territoriality (Delaney, 2005, p.16). In the case of Tijuana, it took some time, after the border was defined, to make the newly enclosed space convey a meaning to its residents different to from the one it had before. A territory composed by both sides of the new boundary had to be partitioned in the minds of its residents, following the lines of the new political map.

¹⁷ El Colegio de México was founded in XXXX, with the name of *La Casa de España*, initially to house Spanish intellectuals exiled by the Civil War. It later changed its name and became one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the country, known for educating the political elite and also the base for well known intellectuals.

¹⁸ Universidad Iberoamericana is a private catholic university founded in 1943.

The establishment of the *Aduana* is a clear example of the importance of State power in this process, with the surveillance and regulation of economic relations among borderlanders. This is also the case of other measures I mentioned in this chapter such as the closure of the casino which deeply affected daily life in the city and stirred the local economy away from activities that were considered incompatible with the ideological framework of the State. Given the fears around the potential loss of Baja California, the concept of citizenship and sense of belonging that it entails became crucial in establishing a relationship between the State and the borderlands, and materialized, for instance, in land ownership.

Cárdenas was indeed very good at solifying the connections between meaning and power at the border, inscribing economic policy decisions in the symbolic context of nationalism and nation building. Indeed, State territoriality at the borderlands has often, if not always, been paired by nationalistic discourses that have brought legitimacy to actions as unpopular as the closing of the casino. Incidentally, this is not exclusive to the Mexican side. As we will see in the next chapter, such discourses have also accompanied expressions of State territoriality from the US government, with the additional component of legal frameworks that include and exclude people according to conditions of “illegality” and “legality”, which are defined by the State.

According to Mauricio Tenorio, “national modern images require internal mediations between economic interests, political aspirations, intellectual visions, cultural perspectives and local social circumstances” (Tenorio, 2000, p.83). The Free Trade Zone is an example of this. It was established as a way to push for industrialization at the border, since the area was out of reach from the national

bourgeoisie, and to reconcile the supply deficiencies that affected border markets. However, the State continued pushing towards territorial integration, as the project to secure national sovereignty started by Cárdenas was continued by the modernization efforts conducted during the fifties, as well as the industrialization of the sixties and seventies.

If the enormous distance from productive sources in the south made it difficult for national producers to satisfy local demand, hindering the implementation of the ISI model, it also allowed for a highly competitive economy to flourish in the city, boosted of course, by the proximity and the strength of the US economy. From a nationalistic perspective, economic opening at the border was also expected to turn the region into a population magnet that would give political and cultural cohesion to the border (Mungaray and Moctezuma, 1984, p.93). In this regard, it is worth recalling Samuel Cuavas' reflections, when he said to me during an interview: "I think that the best way to defend a country's integration is with its population. We lost those territories because they were not populated. So the best fence in Tijuana is the human barrier, more than the walls and fences that these people can build".

The consumption habits, tastes and frames of references introduced by immigrants from the south, were reinforced during the seventies with a conscious effort by the federal government to redesign Tijuana's urban landscape, and turn it into a "Mexican city". The development of the Río Zone and the fact that it became, according to the plan, an important commercial hub in the city, offered a spatial possibility to link Tijuana's massive urban market to Mexico's industry, which could now supply local demand by air, ocean and land routes that had inserted Tijuana into

Mexico's infrastructural network. Urban landscape was, in this case, organized according to patterns that would connect Tijuana consumers, both visually and materially, to the Mexican nation.

According to Robert Sack, territoriality is embedded in social relations (Sack, 1986, p.26). In this chapter I have shown how, through economic policy, expropriation of land and property, institution building and the construction of infrastructure, the Mexican State promoted a redefinition of social relations at the border. In the case of Mexico, these changes can be understood in the frame of post-revolutionary state-building.

State territoriality in Tijuana has conditioned the consumption habits of its population, and with that, reorganized people's patterns of connectivity with the national network and the way in which they produce and understand the border space, which, says Oren Yiftachel, is a key factor in the generation and reproduction of collective identities. In the view of this author, group spatiality, which may include "the degree of ethnic concentration or mix, the proximity of inter-state brethren, the degree of its peripherality, the level of its ideological territoriality and the process of territorial legitimization involved in its identity construction", usually exert a decisive influence on group identity, shaping "collective memories, cultural norms, accents, networks, accessibility to material and symbolic resources, socio-economic status, and position vis a vis the 'Others'" (Yiftachel, p.218.)

By the beginning of the 1980s, the face of Tijuana, both social and visual, had drastically changed. As we will explain more thoroughly in the following chapters, it was also during these years that differences accentuated between those residents who

could or would cross the border to shop, and those who did not, creating new sets of identities and boundaries among Tijuansenses, that were also shaped by another State entity: The United States Government.

TABLES**Table 6.** Percentage of Tijuana Residents who Bought Specific Products in San Ysidro Stores (1979)

84.7	Canned goods
77.2	Dairy
75.6	Staples
61.3	Meats and Vegetables
40.1	Autoparts
45.7	Clothing
42.5	Electronics
33.3	Drugs and Sundries
29.8	Services
21.5	Furniture

CHAPTER 3. TERRITORIALITY BEYOND BORDERS:

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND THE IMPERATIVE OF SOVEREIGNTY

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the policies by which Mexico gradually connected its distant and isolated northwestern border to both its imagined community and infrastructural network. I framed this process in terms of the state-building effort that occupied the post-revolutionary State for most of the twentieth century, in which territorial integration became for Mexican policy makers a key component of the exercise of sovereignty. But manifestations of State territoriality by no means came exclusively from the south. This is particularly true in the case of Tijuana, a city that fortune (or misfortune) has situated on the very edge of the world's most powerful nation. In this chapter I argue that, differently than in the Mexican case, the U.S. government has also exerted centralized control over the region, mostly by securing the physical control of the land and people who live on both sides of the international divide.

On the U.S. side, the border has gone from “benign neglect to heightened militarization” (Ackleson, 2000, p.162), which in the last two decades has severely curtailed a way of life at the border that, as I explained in my first chapter, was very much based on relatively fluid cross-border movement. I will discuss that increased territorial control in this region manifests 1) physically, with the construction of walls, fences and other material infrastructures that have visibly changed the border

landscape 2) legally, with the enactment of legislation that restricts cross-border mobility, while privileging law enforcement over local communities and 3) virtually, with the development of a complex technological network put in place by federal government agencies, with the combined goals of deterrence of unwanted crossers and surveillance of those considered to be welcome.

I will examine policies that, along with the North American Free Trade Agreement, facilitate the free flow of investment and goods, at the time they restrict and regulate cross-border movement. Such policies rely on technologies that reflect and enforce discourses of borders as a threat to U.S. national security, and blur the boundaries between legal and illegal flows. Particularly important is the intensive use of biometric technologies, to implement a system that identifies and classifies borderlanders according to pre-established standards or categories, which include a person's citizenship, legal and economic status. Based on these standards, the State is able to determine and establish the whereabouts of each individual who crosses the border. As means of social control, these technologies come hand in hand with the establishment of a disciplinary regime that subjects border crossers to constant surveillance, with which U.S. authorities enhance their power to manage population and contain space.

These policies are a manifestation of State territoriality. However, territoriality is indeed much more than a strategy for control of the land. It is also an important element of how human associations and institutions organize themselves in space (Delaney, 2005, p.10) and is deeply embedded in social relations (Sack, 1986, p.26), in ways of thinking, acting and being in the world (Delaney, 2005, p.12). Territorial

boundaries are therefore inextricably related to social boundaries (Nevins, 2002, p.149), which explains the fact that border enforcement in Tijuana and San Diego has also redefined social relations between and among communities.

This gives relevance to exploring how people, entities and things are caught up and shaped within spatial systems and networks, connected with “particular geometries of power” (Maansvelt, 2005, p.16). In fact, territorial control at the US-Mexican border has altered the “spatial socialization” of borderlanders, understood as a “process through which individual actors and collectives are socialized as members of a specifically territorially bounded spatial entity, and through which they internalize collective territorial identities and shared traditions” (Ackleson, 2000, p.172). Towards the end of this chapter, I will provide some examples of how the policies I describe have a tendency to favor certain forms of association, as well as the ways in which people see themselves in relation to the “other side”, the Mexican homeland, and their own community. Later, in my last two chapters, I explain in more detail how the material border that divides San Diego and Tijuana is also enforcing social boundaries among residents.

2. Materializing Division: The Ports of Entry and the Town of San Ysidro.

Symbolically, territorial boundaries combine a statement about direction in space and possession or exclusion (Sack, 1986, p.22). For this reason territoriality is a form of communication that may involve a marker or sign such as those commonly found at the border. In Tijuana-San Diego, such markers were first embodied in the towers established as a part of post-war arrangements in the nineteenth century. There

are 442 of these monuments throughout the U.S.-Mexican border establishing the limits between the two republics. However, from a more pragmatic perspective, it is the ports of entry (POEs), which to this day communicate, reproduce and symbolize the State's exercise of sovereign power over this corner of the borderlands. As an instance of territoriality, these infrastructures have the function of directing and regulating movement from one side to the other of the international divide. They involve "an attempt at enforcing control over access to the area and to things within it" (Sack, 1986, p.21).

The first U.S. officers were appointed to patrol the border area two decades after the end of the Mexican-American War, in 1871 (Price, 1970, p.46). During those times, the customs office at the Tijuana-San Diego border was located in a general store just on the American side, and later moved into the border official's home (Martis, 1970, p.29). Just like in Tijuana (See Chapter 2) there seemed to be no need, during these years, to position these representatives of State authority at the international borderline. They were located instead in the middle of town. It wasn't until 1900 that a small customs house was built near the present location.

The town of San Ysidro was officially founded in 1908 and twenty years later, in 1928, the U.S. government officially declared it a U.S. port of entry. As a part of the infrastructure projects carried out during the Great Depression to rescue the economy, U.S. authorities also built the gate, the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Customs (Bilbao, 1995, p.16). These buildings would constitute the first infrastructures to regulate border crossings at the border. One year later, in 1929, Mexican citizens were first required to have a visa to enter the United States, and

penalties to enter the country through locations other than the official ports of entry increased (Payan, 2006, p.11.) It was also during these years that the Border Patrol was founded.

During the prohibition, alcohol smuggling through the border became more frequent, which along with the quotas for immigration imposed by Congress in 1921 and 1924, increased pressures on local bureaucrats to enforce both customs and immigration laws (Payan, 2006, p.10). These events marked a trend towards stronger controls, which tightened even more in the forties, with the Second World War. To prevent espionage, there were meticulous inspections, and even censorship of letters, that produced traffic jams. This was also the moment when inequalities and asymmetries between the two countries became more evident (Payan, 2006, p.11). Border bureaucracies began during these years to keep records of all cross-border transactions, increasing the paperwork and therefore the number of agents working on the border. This produced “a momentum towards greater vigilance at the border, creating a deep sense of separation between the two nations”. Surveillance was, however, mostly focused on customs and cross-border interaction was still relatively easy (Payan, 2006, p.11). Up until then, Americans were the main crossers, but this trend reverted a decade later and it was then the Mexicans who crossed more (Martis, 1970, p.40). In 1949 69.5 percent of crossers were U.S. citizens. Twenty years later, in 1969, Mexicans represented 57.7 percent of crossers (Martis, 1970, p.40).

In the San Ysidro of the 1950s, the economy had moved from agriculture to services, and there was a proliferation of establishments heavily dependent on Tijuana customers. There were businesses that processed immigration paperwork, public

accountants, supermarkets, small restaurants, clothing and shoe stores, as well as hotels (Bilbao, 1995, p.77). Already in the 1960s, 90 percent of commercial activity in San Ysidro was directly linked to people from Tijuana and the rest of Mexico, who patronized wholesale and retail stores, either to consume at home or to then resell on the southern side of the border (Bilbao, 1995, p.78). The post office was built in 1962 and Mexican merchants were among the primary beneficiaries (Bilbao, 1995, p.78).

In the mid sixties, the construction of Interstate 805 dismembered the San Ysidro community, and also brought national chains like Jack in the Box, McDonalds, Kmart, Travel Lodge, etc, all of which attracted the Mexican market. In fact, the San Ysidro Jack in the Box became a common destination for people from Tijuana to go for lunch. People would cross the border just to lunch at Jack in the Box. Because San Ysidro was so dependent on Mexican shoppers, the community was vulnerable to fluctuations in the dollar-peso exchange, plunging drastically with each of the devaluations of the Mexican peso that I mentioned in the previous chapter. After the Mexican crisis of 1982, San Ysidro as well as other U.S. border merchants even sought federal assistance. In response, President Ronald Reagan created a Border Aid Program (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.99.)

Towards the east of the Freeway 805, the Otay Mesa port of entry was built in 1985, to ease the heavy traffic in San Ysidro and also to connect the U.S. side with the industrial areas that were being developed in the east of Tijuana (See Chapter 2). As opposed to San Ysidro, Otay Mesa includes extensive facilities for north and southbound cargo, and nowadays, all commercial vehicles transporting merchandise go through this port of entry leaving San Ysidro for the exclusive use of passengers.

Initially a rural community, Otay Mesa has become, on both sides of the border, a hub of industrial activities, warehouses, and commercial property.

3. Documents of Exception. The *Forma 13* and *tarjetas de cruce* in a Local Landscape of Movement.

In Chapter 1, I described the landscapes of cross-border fluidity where many *Tijuanenses* conducted their daily businesses. During the two years of ethnographic research I conducted in Tijuana, I ran into people who remembered crossing the border very often, almost as if it didn't exist, and also to some who, out of nationalism or lack of papers, claimed that they "never" went to "the other side". I was often amused and intrigued then when my interviews moved forward and I found out that they, indeed, went to San Diego once or more times a week for several reasons. In one case, a lady who had claimed to never cross the border because she strongly disliked the "gringos" mentioned to me that once a week she gathered with some friends to play cards. When I asked her where they met, she said "here in Chula Vista". After hesitating (I did not want to confront her directly) I reminded her of her statement about never crossing the border. She looked at me in part disconcerted and in part exasperated and she said: No, I just visit my friend in her house.

This was, for me, part of a process where I learned that, for *Tijuanenses*, words that described the frequency or tone of their cross-border relations belonged to a whole different system of meaning. People, who claimed to "almost never cross", indeed did it two or three times a week. People who claimed to never have bothered to obtain a visa because "I don't want to have anything to do with *them*", indeed consumed the

same items as those who did. How did you then obtain clothes and other supplies? I asked one of them. “My family brought me everything”, he replied. Yet, it became clear to me that for many *Tijuanaenses*, cross border ties were so ingrained in everyday routines that cross border transactions did not mean anything *per se*, but in terms of their purpose, in this case playing cards at a friend’s house or buying a pair of jeans.

As the old residents I interviewed never ceased to remind me, going to San Diego was commonly assumed to be “lo más normal” (a normal thing). It was invested with a sense of immediacy; an act that one did not need to plan in advance. People would carry their entry documents all the time “por si se ofrece”, they said. Just in case they changed their mind in the last minute and decided to go to San Ysidro, Chula Vista or San Diego. Sometimes, if they forgot the visa at home, some went across anyway, telling the officer in their perfect English they were “American citizens” and they were waved through. This “false declaration of citizenship” was not given much thought; as one of my interviewees once told me, “it was just telling ‘them’ what they wanted to hear so that I could go on with my life”. At a first glance, it was often nearly impossible for inspectors to notice the difference if people from both sides of the border often looked the same, spoke both English and Spanish fluently, and wore the same clothes. As I have discussed before, they embodied the blurriness between the two sides.

The legal framework for this landscape of movement was a regime of exception, through which the U.S. government implicitly recognized the mutual interdependence of border communities. U.S. laws were loosely enforced at this border as there was an unofficial tolerance that allowed the community to live their

daily life without much intervention from the State, for the economic benefit of both sides. In Price's words: Border officials use a loose working definition of national customs and immigration laws that emphasizes the spirit of the law more than the letter of the law" (Price: p. 43). In his 1973 ethnography about Tijuana, John Price wrote extensively about this issue:

The border is a meeting place of two civilizations each to the degree of their differences, exotic to the other. This difference between civilizations leads to a mutually advantageous exchange of goods and services. The flow of goods and services may be so economically important that many ordinary laws are disregarded and a special informal "border town law" is created (Price, 1973, p.42).

Indeed, I will explain in this chapter how, through a series of legal measures and physical acts of power, this "border town law" was gradually replaced by national law and *going* to San Diego became *traveling*, as it was abruptly "denaturalized" by U.S. authorities. I have mentioned that, since 1929, Mexican citizens were required to have visas to enter the United States. However, unlike other Mexican citizens, border residents could use an entirely different document, called the INS I-187 Border Crossing Card (BCC), commonly known as "Mica". According to regulations established by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), these cards were issued "for the convenience of our Mexican neighbors for such activities as shopping or visiting relatives within the international frontier area of the United States" (INS in Martis, p.14). It took about a year of residence in Tijuana to become eligible for a BCC, and only residence and employment in Baja California were required to apply (Musbach, 1980, p.2.). The *Mica* allowed free movement in the U.S. side of the border within 25 miles for up to 72 hours, with the only restriction that its holders were

strictly forbidden to accept employment of any kind. People could obtain them at the port of entry and they had no expiration date.

Children 14 years and under could cross with their mothers as long as their names were listed on the card (Martis, 1970, p.15). Interestingly, there was no need to own a passport to obtain a BCC. In fact, Tijuana did not have a passport office until the early nineties. People who needed to obtain passports had to do so in San Diego. If the person did not have an entry document, officers from the Mexican Consulate in San Diego would call the port of entry, and a special permission was granted. It should be noted, however, that even if cards were relatively easy to obtain, they were not issued to all applicants. Entrance was denied to “such people as the mentally retarded, criminals, prostitutes, smugglers and any other person whose entry would be contrary to the best interest of the U.S.” (Martis, 1970, p.13).

It was towards the late 1970s that harsh economic conditions in Mexico, in addition to the increased economic activity produced by PRONAF, and the other programs I described in the previous chapter, began to attract yet larger numbers of migrants from the south, some of whom made their way illegally into the United States or stayed in Tijuana in search of work. Demographic pressures were intense. Between 1960 and 1970, the city’s population more than doubled from 165 000 to 340 583 people (INEGI). At this point, the unofficial regime of tolerance that prevailed at the border started to be perceived as a challenge to U.S. sovereignty.

Some border scholars agree that, by definition, cross-border flows represent a challenge to State interests. In fact, in his seminal book about border people, Oscar Martínez established a direct correlation between increased transnational interaction

and diminished sovereignty on both sides of the border (Martínez, 1994, p.25.) Trans-boundary flows are considered to be problematic because they challenge defined identities of those who live at the border. Aside from smuggling or migration, even practices like cross border shopping offer an opportunity for exploring the strength or fragility with which State structures exert their influence (Wilson and Hastings, 1998, p.21). For this reason the border is crucial to the nation-state so that “the less control there is of these flows the more integrated neighboring nation-states will become, while the restraint of flows is crucial to the definition of the border” (Price, 1973, p.160). Already in 1973, there was constant tension between economic forces of integration and the political need of separation. Increased border controls thus represented “a political process that is used to control an economic process” (Price, 1973, p.163). In the following section, I will discuss how, during the last three decades, we have witnessed at the U.S.-Mexico border a constant tension between political interests of territorial control and the economic drive for cross-border integration.

4. Issues of Sovereignty: Illegal Crossings and the Imperative of Territorial Control

As I mentioned above, legal restrictions to the entry of Mexicans in the United States first became visible during the Great Depression, coinciding with the moment when the basic physical infrastructure to regulate border crossings was built. During those years, growing anti-immigrant sentiments favored policies that strongly restricted entry visas to Mexicans. A visible anti-Mexican climate also led, between 1929 and 1935, to massive deportations and half a million people were rounded up and

deported to Mexico or pressured to leave, including tens of thousands of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent (Nevins, 2002, p.33). In Tijuana, massive deportations brought new residents to neighborhoods like *Colonia Libertad*, that initially was viewed as a place for outsiders but that gradually integrated into the everyday life of *Tijuanenses*.

The World War and the celebration of the Bracero Agreement in 1942 put a partial end to massive deportations. Yet, ten years before the official termination of the Bracero Agreement, in 1954, Operation Wetback led to a massive crackdown on Mexican-American neighborhoods, predominantly on agricultural areas in California and Texas, where “Mexican-looking” people were arrested and deported. However, while Operation Wetback did outline a pattern of apprehension techniques and mechanisms of control that were later perfected, these policies did not significantly affect the everyday lives of *Tijuanenses*. It was not until 1969, when the Nixon administration implemented Operation Intercept that Tijuana residents started to gradually feel the territorial power of the U.S. government. Intercept consisted primarily in the sudden intensive search and inspection of every plane, truck or person that entered the United States from Mexico both legally and illegally. For this purpose, thousands of extra Border Patrol, Customs and Immigration agents were placed along the borderline that separates the two countries, from San Diego to Brownsville with the mandate of inspecting “anything that moved” (Doyle, 2003).

The impact on cross border movement was significant. “Where traditionally U.S. officials would wave nineteen out of twenty vehicles through the lines, now each and every cargo was subjected to a thorough search, creating an instant nightmare for millions of legal commuters and commercial traders” (Doyle, 2003.) Tijuana

businesses lost 75 percent of their revenues and San Diego businesses 25 to 35 percent (Bilbao, 1995, p.40). This affected some practices of everyday life, like for instance crossing the border to do the laundry, which reflected how *Tijuanenses* circulated across borders to conduct daily activities. During those years, San Ysidro Laundromats lost 60 to 90 percent of their revenue (Proffitt, 1988, p.47). In response, Tijuana consumers carried out *Operación Orgullo* (Operation Pride) that basically consisted in avoiding crossing the border to shop, starting a pattern of showing disagreement with U.S. policies that affected them with the only reaction mechanism they had: their shopping habits.

When Operation Intercept ended, Mexican consumption went back to normal, and even increased. However, this event started a process in which people in Tijuana gradually modified the perception of those places north of the border that until then felt so much part of their own home. Going to “the other side” became less and less a practice that could be taken for granted. Defenseless, these borderlanders had no choice but to submit to the increasing manifestations of U.S Statepower in their own lives, even if strictly, they resided beyond its territory.

Towards the 1980s, there was in the United States a growing perception that the government was losing control over its own borders. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the need to justify the budgets of intelligence agencies coincided with the rerouting of drug trade from the Caribbean Ocean into Florida, to Mexican territory and across the common border (See Payán, 2006). This increased pressures (and incentives) to orchestrate a defensive drug policy that viewed in the southern neighbor the vehicle through which illegal substances penetrated domestic markets. In this

context, U.S. policy-makers transplanted, in the southern border, the old habit of finding the nation's threats beyond its territorial limits, this time looking at the illegal flow of drugs and the unauthorized transit of workers.

This is when, as a “symbolic representation of authority” (Andreas 2000, p.x), the United States government started to construct a complex system of legal and physical infrastructures to deter the illegal passage of people and merchandise as well as to regulate and control legal traffic. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was one of the first steps to deter undocumented immigration. IRCA provided the legal means to prosecute immigrants and their employers in U.S. territory as well as the material resources to stop them in the act of crossing the border. Later on, and motivated by the economic recession of the 1990s, the U.S. government dramatically increased the funds to contain immigration in their southwest border, increasing the number of border patrol agents from 3,389 in 1993 to 8,200 in 1999, and reaching 10,000 in 2000 (Dominguez and Fernandez de Castro 2001, p.136).

5. Territoriality Beyond Borders and the Enforcement of Boundaries

In the following sections I will discuss how State territoriality has been manifested in the Tijuana-San Diego border. I will argue that with the approval of NAFTA, the U.S. government faced the dual challenge of securing its borders while facilitating free trade. Logistically, this was done with the establishment of physical, legal and virtual infrastructures that ultimately imposed what I call architecture of difference at the border, where local identities became modified by classifications and standards imposed by the State. In this, state of the art technologies have been used by

border authorities on the U.S. side to design a *border panopticon*, where the State exerts strong powers in restricting, surveiling and regulating the everyday lives of border residents. All and all, this leads to the establishment of a regime of exclusion substantiated by criteria of purity. Towards the end of the chapter, I explain how this affects cross-border mobility among borderlanders.

5.1 The Closedown: NAFTA, Operation Gatekeeper and the Establishment of the Selective Border

In the early 1990s, the end of the cold war and the emergence of supranational organizations like the European Union reinforced arguments and theories of deterritorialization that questioned the relevance of borders and states in the global map (See for instance Ohmae, 1990). The perception that increased economic ties and the growing interaction that came with them would decrease the relevance of national boundaries was common among both scholars and politicians. “Along the U.S.-Mexican Border, the sanctity of the once impenetrable political boundary is being eclipsed by a growing system of social and economic linkages”, wrote Larry Herzog in 1990 (Herzog, 1990, p.8). Obviously, these expectations were intensified with NAFTA which, aside from a limited temporary visa program for skilled workers (the TN visas), did not include provisions on immigration.

In Mexico, the ratification of NAFTA and the adoption of neoliberalism substantially changed the role of the country’s northern border in the economy and the national *ethos*. If in the past the border constituted a regime of exception to economic nationalism, it now became the model of what the whole country would become in the post-NAFTA era. The limited forms of economic liberalism and market competition

that had been granted by the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) now extended to the rest of the national territory. Commercial opening and the redefinition of the role of the State turned the northern border into the fundamental nucleus of interamerican integration, which promoted a new model of development. (Mungaray, 1997, p.14). In the realm of culture the border, previously seen as a deviation from the “authentic” expressions of “Mexicanness” generated in the center, was now positioned at the vanguard, in a process that was called by some scholars “the borderization of Mexico” (Monsivais 1998, García Canclini). From its previous low status in the mainstream cultural hierarchy, Tijuana ascended to be considered a window to Mexico’s future. In this context, the consumption of foreign goods was no longer seen as an expression of *malinchismo*, as it had been in the past, but accepted as part of the global condition (See García Canclini, 1995).

In Tijuana-San Diego, as well as for the rest of the border, NAFTA immediately showed its face in far more contradictory ways than it was perceived at the center. On the one hand, the treaty inserted, once and for all, this previously remote and insular area into mainland Mexico, turning it into the geographical node that connected the two national economies. The tremendous increase in bilateral trade (from 55.2 billion dollars in 1989 to 266 billion in 2004) greatly affected the border region: By 2004, 69 percent of the value of the NAFTA merchandise trade was carried across the common border by truck (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.190). Accordingly, the number of 20 foot containers entering U.S. border crossings doubled between 1990 and 2000 (Ackleson, 2003, p.64). Particularly in the California-Baja California border, the impact was huge: Between 1995 and 2004 the number of trucks crossing into the

United States through the ports of entry increased by 167 percent (Ganster and Loery, 2008, p.190).

However, with the increase in trade also came a boost to border enforcement and a remarkably hostile anti-immigrant climate on the U.S. side. As unauthorized immigration into San Diego grew, distinctions between Mexico and the United States that were not necessarily evident in the region before broke down into Southern California (Nevins, 2002, p.59). The anti-immigrant climate reached a peak in 1994, when Californians passed Proposition 187, in favor of measures that denied undocumented migrants basic services. One year before, in 1993, Washington had launched *Operation Blockade* in El Paso, Texas in an effort to place physical barriers to the flow of people across the common border. At the end of the same year, in 1993, the name was changed to *Operation Hold the Line*, and similar policies were implemented in other points of the U.S.-Mexico Border. This is the case of Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego.

Between 1990 and 1996, there was a 65 per cent increase in the number of immigration agents and an 89 percent increase in the number of support staff for the Border Patrol. U.S. Customs, for its part, raised its expenditures by 350 million dollars from 1989 to 1993, improving facilities along the border and adding almost 1000 additional inspectors (Andreas 1996, p.62). A new electronic fingerprinting system (IDENT) was also initiated to detect people who had been previously apprehended. This in fact marked the beginning of a solid and productive marriage between biometric technologies and law enforcement agencies at the border that I will address

later in this chapter. Also, Gatekeeper granted the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) a budget increase of one hundred percent, between 1993 and 1997.

In 1996, another important piece of legislation, IIRIRA, increased at the federal level civil penalties for illegal entry, taking serious steps in criminalizing unauthorized immigration, even making it, in some cases, subject to incarceration. IIRIRA also expanded the authority and funding of law enforcement agencies at the border and reduced the rights of those subject to apprehension, as it prohibited federally financed legal services to bring class action suits against the INS on behalf of illegal immigrants (De Laet 2000, p.127). Also, it led to a massive hiring of Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs agents at the border. People coming from different parts of the country were recruited and brought to the region, without really having local roots or even exposure to the specific characteristics of border communities.

According to a Mexican diplomat whom I interviewed for this project “agents who are not from here find it easier to impose the codes of the federal government and to decide who belongs and who doesn’t according to criteria decided many miles away, in Washington DC”. In a sense, this change was crucial in the process of imposing what Price had called “national law” over “border town law” that I mentioned above. In Tijuana, many could not understand why, suddenly, individuals who “were not even from here”, were given the power of hindering, blocking and restricting their way around. Many of the people I interviewed shared a feeling that these agents did not have the right to restrict *them*, who had lived in the region *for ever*. This started a process in which, as I will explain later, U.S. law enforcement at

the border, had to resort to a series of resources to discipline and re-educate the border population.

IIRIRA also led to a vast intervention in re-shaping the border landscape. It came along with fourteen miles of fencing already in place south of San Diego, and the construction of a 10 feet high steel fence that eventually extended east, into the Otay mountains (Andreas, 2000, p.91). This was the time when local communities on both sides of the border began to lose the historical connections that had bound them together and cross-border social and family relations began to weaken (Payán, 2006, p.13).

In this context, it is important to note that these policies hosted a symbolic and discursive reinforcement of the border as an impenetrable barrier, gradually investing border crossing with a criminal connotation (Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.10). As Jason Ackleson explained in the case of Hold the Line in El Paso, they changed the dominant “territorial discourse of the border”, altering the way people understand their boundedness (Ackleson, 2000, p.172). Furthermore, these logistical operations triggered antagonistic feelings among residents from both sides of the fence. Regional and binational integration also led to “a perceived need to heighten difference, a sentiment that would peak in Southern California in the early 1990 and facilitate the emergence of Gatekeeper” (Nevins, 2002, p.59). In the case of El Paso, Pablo Vila notes how Operation Blockade revealed sentiments of otherness and cross-border hostilities that borderlanders previously thought did not exist (Vila, 2004, p.232). Both in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, people responded to Proposition 187 the same way they had done back in 1969: by boycotting stores located north of the border.

In the past, some Tijuana residents crossed the border through the beach for a number of reasons: they lacked the proper documents to cross or they simply preferred to avoid the wait at the line on their way to work, visit family or attend concerts. As I mentioned before, it was sometimes too much of a detour to go all the way to the gate. However, with the increased use of the beach as a path for immigrants traveling from other parts of Mexico, the construction of the wall channeled the flow of crossers towards the ports of entry. Unauthorized crossers then made their way to the deserts of Arizona or attempted to cross with forged documents through the ports of entry, which boosted the number of apprehensions. In this context, agents started paying more attention and energy to stop practices like the false declaration of citizenship.

According to a Mexican diplomat who was active in duty during those years: “Despite the fact that restrictive measures were primarily directed to migrants who came from the south and center of Mexico, they inevitably affected the local population”. In their everyday lives, Tijuana residents soon started feeling the tension of increased cross-border ties between Mexico and the United States at a binational level, and growing restrictions to a local way of life that for decades substantiated itself in cross-border mobility. As more and more imported products started flowing from the south to Tijuana markets through commercial networks that connected the city to mainland Mexico, it started becoming increasingly difficult to cross the border and shop in San Diego stores. Waits at the ports of entry became longer due to more careful and lengthy inspections. Also, as I will discuss below, legal restrictions to obtain entry documents multiplied and became more common.

This illustrates the fact that increasing transboundary flows intensify, in this global age, the contradiction between two key functions of the modern state: boundary enforcement and transboundary economic development (See Nevins, 2000, pp106-108). While there is a clear transnationalization of in the economic realm, politics are renationalizing. In this context, border crossing has emerged as a strategic site for states to reaffirm their authority. Border controls have become a mechanism through which the nationalist State retains its claim as an absolute sovereign in the realm of immigration control, while abdicating to denationalizing forces in other areas of responsibility (Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.22). This explains the creation of two parallel regimes, one for the circulation of capital and another for the circulation of immigrants (Sassen, 1996, p.xvi).

Because it is obviously impossible to dissociate politics from economics, the policies I mentioned above soon took a toll on regional development and started affecting stakeholders who had benefitted in the past from interactions with Mexico. This led to the formation of an informal coalition of local businessmen, Chambers of Commerce, non-profit organizations, universities and so on, which in a variety of ways struggled to create awareness both among public opinion and decision-makers, about the economic cost of placing barriers to cross-border interaction. Particularly active was the San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, which represented merchants that as I have mentioned above, strongly depended on Tijuana consumers.

This was the context in which the San Diego Dialogue, a non-profit organization based at UCSD, published a report entitled “Who Crosses the Border”, that quantitatively described the purpose and nature of cross-border legal transit in San

Diego-Tijuana, which represents to the present around 97 percent of total crossings. In addition, this project aimed to study the contribution of Tijuana residents to taxable retail sales in San Diego County and to establish the relationship between waits at the border, border crossings and retail sales (San Diego Dialogue, 1994, p.i). By and large, the study calculated there were 5 to 6 million monthly northbound border crossings, 69 percent of which were done by Mexicans and 29 percent U.S. citizens (San Diego Dialogue, 1994, p.7). According to its findings, the primary reason for crossing was to visit relatives (in 1.4 million of the cases) and shopping (in 1.8 million of these trips), and border crossers spent yearly in San Diego County approximately 1.5 billion on goods subject to California sales tax, leaving a tax revenue of 120 million dollars (San Diego Dialogue, 1994, p.25).

“Who Crosses the Border” was successful in creating awareness among politicians of the economic costs of enforcing the border, which could potentially become also a political cost. These pressures, added to the increased interaction that came with NAFTA, put U.S. authorities in the crossroads between what some officials of the time called “enforcement and facilitation”. Like in other places of the world, it became obvious that the criminalization of some forms of border crossing came hand in hand with concerns that border policies not restrict socially desirable crossers, in particular business travelers, students, and tourists (Wonders, 2006, p.79). Policy-makers in the United States were thus confronted with the need to reconcile two contradictory mandates: to enforce an increasingly restrictive law that aimed to halt the unauthorized transit of people and drugs, and to facilitate a growing binational trade that was considered by Washington to be beneficial for the national economy. To

this dilemma, U.S. government officials found the solution in the establishment of an increasingly selective border, operated through the application of high-end technologies of surveillance.

In 2000, I participated in a research project that included interviews with 50 policy-makers from both Mexico and the United States involved in the administration of the border. During my meetings with elected officials, diplomats, officers and managers, it became apparent that actors on the U.S. side were placing high expectations on technology to solve the contradictory need for “enforcement and facilitation”, which would consequently require high budget increases for their respective agencies. In opposition, Mexican officials argued that while technology helped, there would not be a comprehensive solution to the issue of illegal flows without what they called “*voluntad politica*” (political will) and a bilateral perspective to the issue (Herrera-Lasso, Murià and Lemus, 2000).

So far, there has not been an effective solution to the problem of illegal immigration or drug trafficking. In fact, some scholars sustain that, along with legal transactions, free market reforms and economic integration have also fueled illegal flows (See Andreas, 1996, p.56, Sassen, 1996, pp 76-88). However, the U.S. government has succeeded in reaffirming its territorial presence over the border area, re-orienting if not halting unauthorized movement, and as I will discuss below, closely scrutinizing legal flows. But, perhaps more importantly, the U.S. government has managed to establish its symbolic power over the region, and cemented a state of security that later solidified with the developments of September 11, of 2001.

In Peter Andreas' view, "border policing is not simply a policy instrument for deterring illegal crossings but a symbolic representation of State authority; it communicates the State's commitment to marking and maintaining the borderline" (Andreas, 2000, p. 8). In this sense, Andreas has described these activities as a *mis en scene* for American public opinion: "As the U.S.-Mexico border experience illustrates, the political and bureaucratic allure of enhanced law enforcement is that it has delivered perceptually appealing and symbolically useful indicators of State activity" (Andreas, 2000, p.144). As I will discuss below, the measures I have described became the point of departure for the launching of refined technologies of power that subject border society to constant surveillance. Not surprisingly, the big losers in these developments have been Tijuana residents.

5.2 The Laser Visa: Identifying and Disciplining Borderlanders.

As a logical outcome of the policies I mentioned above, two trends became apparent in the process of border policy-making: the increased importance placed in the identification of people and the imperative of establishing a disciplinary regime at the border that would enhance territorial control. Territoriality involves the regulation of movement, and the legitimate means of movement depends on the identification of people. For this reason states hold the "legitimate monopoly of movement" (Torpey 2000) which they seek to secure by unambiguously establishing people's identities (Torpey, 2000, p.6 and Nevins, 2002, 159). To Torpey, "in order to extract resources and implement policies, States must be in a position to locate and lay claim of people and goods" (Torpey, 2000, p.11).

At the same time, territoriality also rests on the interconnection between space and behavior (Sack, 1986, p.25), which brings us to consider the relevance of discipline in this process. Michel Foucault said that “discipline may be identified neither with an institution nor within an apparatus, it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets, it is ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology” (Foucault, 1977, p.215.) Discipline, he argued, was never more valorized than at the moment when it became important to manage population. In his words: “The notion of a government of population renders all the more acute the problem of the foundation of sovereignty and all the more acute equally the necessity for the development of discipline” (Foucault, 1991, p.95).

In the field of border studies, scholars have frequently examined the connections between sovereignty and space, but rarely between discipline and space. Drawing on Foucault, Rob Shields described this relationship as follows: “Discipline proceeds by the organization of individuals in space, and it therefore requires a specific enclosure of space. In the hospital, the school, or the military field, we find reliance on an orderly grid. Once established, this grid permits the sure distribution of the individuals to be disciplined and supervised, this procedure facilitates the reduction of dangerous multitudes or wandering vagabonds to fixed and docile individuals” (Shields, 1991, p.39).

In his book about Operation Gatekeeper, Joseph Nevins refers to social constructions, such as that of the “illegal alien” (Nevis, 2002) as technologies of control. But, how to know for sure who falls into the character of “illegal alien” if

often many border crossers look the same, speak both English and Spanish fluently, and even wear the same clothes? I have mentioned before how everyday practices of cross-border mobility have helped maintain the hybrid character of the borderlander. These practices have historically made it hard for authorities to accurately identify border populations, which represent a challenge to notions of belonging that are considered to be essential in the construction of citizenship. And since “citizenship is tied up with territory insomuch as contemporary notions of citizenship are tied up with sovereignty” (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.21), this explains why borderlanders have then been subject to increased scrutiny at the U.S.-Mexico border, as there is an increasing trend to tag as a threat people across international borders who leave the spaces where they ‘belong’ and enter those where they do not” (Torpey, 2000, p.12).

During my many experiences crossing the border, I had the opportunity to observe, more than once, an exasperated agent trying to classify a crosser. When they asked where the person was from, they often got a clear but vague response: “from here”. Now, they prefer to ask “where where you born”, and pressure people to narrow down their answer: “San Diego”, or “Minneapolis”, or “Beirut, Lebanon”, in which case the person would be asked to provide proof of citizenship or legal residence. This is when, as I will elaborate later, the use of biometric and other cutting-edge technologies become essential in facilitating the identification of crossers. After a few exemplary cases of local residents who became subject to deportation and deprivation of their documents because they made a false statement at the border, studied or lived on the wrong side, or attempted to cross between ports of entry, *Tijuanenses* got the

picture that things had changed for good and that they would have to deal with a tougher and more omnipresent State authority in their daily lives.

This is the case of a young girl I interviewed at a shelter for deported children in Tijuana. Unlike the other kids currently in the facility who usually came from rural areas of southern Mexico, she was a local and her appearance made me think she came from a middle class background. In the trunk of her car, she and a cousin had tried to smuggle a friend who had lost his visa, to attend a U2 concert in San Diego. I had heard the same story before: Students driving from other parts of Baja California with tickets for a rock concert. One of them forgets the visa at home, jumps in the trunk and remains there all the way to the Sports Arena. This time, however, the girl and her cousin were caught, deported, and their visas taken away. Crying, she couldn't understand why the agents were so "strict" with her, since she was not a migrant, she was only going to a concert. She barely realized that her life was going to drastically change from that moment, all for the sake of U2.

Disciplinary measures, however, went beyond the simple law enforcement at the border. A more comprehensive system was put in place to secure control of the population, which included tougher standards of eligibility to cross to "the other side". One of the first steps that made this effective was the replacement of all crossing cards with a new document: the laser visa. In 1998, the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana began informing the population through several media that the old *micas* would need to be replaced by a new document. Starting in June 1998, people in Tijuana had to visit a U.S. consulate to apply for this new form of entry document. The replacement effort

was massive: during the first months of this process, between June 1st and December 31st of 1998, there were 48 thousand applications (Falcón, 2007).

The laser visas are machine readable, credit-card-sized documents “with digitally encoded biometric data, including the bearer’s photograph and fingerprint” (Department of State, 2002). There are several significant differences with the old crossing cards. Their biometric components make them a lot more difficult to forge. In order to obtain this new document, applicants now need to own a passport, which give the event of crossing the border to San Diego a legal and symbolic connotation of formality. For the first time, people started realizing that going to San Diego was actually traveling abroad. Also, unlike the other cards that did not expire, the new document has a validity of 10 years, upon which the holder has to apply for a new one. In compliance to IIRIRA, all BCCs expired on October 1, 1999. The deadline was later extended to Sep 30, 2001. By then more than 5 million cards had been replaced in the whole country. By September of 2002, seven hundred thousand cards were issued in Baja California, 350 hundred thousand Tijuana to residents.

The laser visa de facto eliminated the status of exception border residents had enjoyed until then. It is the same document that is now given to all Mexican citizens who travel to the United States. The State Department mandated that “laser visa applicants must meet the same eligibility standards as those for the B1/B2 visa¹. Applicants must demonstrate that they have ties to Mexico that would compel them to return after a temporary stay in the United States. U.S. consular officers look for evidence of strong family, business, or social ties” (State Department, 2008).

¹ B1/B2 Visas are documents that allowed foreign nationals to visit the United States as tourists.

According to Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA): “Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status” (State Department, 2008).

Needless to say some of the parameters used to determine “family, businesses or social ties” are hard to fulfill at the border, since families are often spread on both sides of the line, as are social and businesses networks. At the border, the notion of “ties to Mexico” is often interpreted in terms of economic affluence, or a secure source of income that decreases the risk that the person will use the card to work illegally on “the other side”. In fact, many applicants who are denied visas in Tijuana are not necessarily told that the reason for this decision is that they will potentially “move” to the United States, but that they will use the document to “work”.

Aside from the Mexican passport, the requirements to apply for a laser visa are a voting card, a series of forms filled out on the Internet, proof of payment of 131 dollars made to BANAMEX (a national bank), and supporting documentation detailing “employment, reason for travel, and/or **current** financial status” (U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, 2008). These are the documents that are used to demonstrate that the applicant has motives and intention to return to his or her country at the end of the visit. Appointments need to be made by telephone, 1.25 dollars a minute that are either charged to a credit card or show on the telephone bill. The telephone system operates nationally, and often there are no appointments available for a specific location, so the applicant needs to keep calling (and paying) until a spot is made

available. On occasions, people end up spending over one hundred dollars just to be able to make an appointment in the city they want.

Unlike the previous “micas” that were often issued to mothers and their offspring, the laser visa cannot be shared by members of the same family. It is an individual document that can only be owned by one person, and every individual who crosses the border is required to own one. This is essential in the process of disciplining the border population. According to Foucault, one of the key components of discipline is the individualization of bodies (Foucault, 1977, p.146). Documents issued to mothers and their children added confusion at the moment of crossing the border. Authorities needed, in Foucauldian terms, to “avoid distributions in groups, break up collective dispositions” (Foucault, 1977, p.143). Replacing the *micas* with the laser visa has a lot to do with ensuring that each individual has his own place; and each place its individual (Foucault, 1977, p.143).

The new difficulties to obtain a laser visa as well as the fact that they are very hard to replicate have made them highly desirable in the black market. In fact, 15 percent of the visa applications in Tijuana are for replacements of stolen or lost documents (Ramírez, 2006, p.1). These facts, along with the disciplinary measures I have mentioned above, have an impact in everyday life, since they regulate people’s mobility, habits and relations in a new way. As a direct result of this denaturalization of movement, going to “the other side” is becoming more and more of a production and much less a spontaneous decision. Those who forget their visa at home; they might as well go get it.

At the same time, fewer and fewer people are carrying their documents with them all the time. As I mentioned before, people remember in the past making last minute decisions to cross the border for whatever reason. This required their documents to be with them all the time. However, more and more people are being robbed on the spot, or their documents stolen at public places. It is commonly said that laser visas are so appreciated by robbers, that they would rather return a person the cash or the credit cards, and keep the visa instead. By the same token, a lost visa at the border can be extremely disrupting. In some cases it is only about the cost of replacing the documents, which, as I have mentioned, is fairly high. However, in other situations it may be a life changing event, as the person may not have the certainty of being considered eligible for a new one.

About a year ago, Laureana Velazquez lost her visa in an inexplicable way. She went to the Walmart in Chula Vista with her mother and then to visit an aunt. It was a hot day, and she recalls she was not feeling very well, perhaps coming down with flu. She believes the documents may have fallen accidentally from her purse, back in Tijuana, when she stepped out of her car and made her way to her apartment, loaded with Walmart bags, sweaty, tired, and pressured by a husband who was left to babysit their child...And when she reached for her wallet to put the card in a safe place, the visa was gone. A year later, Laureana is still unable to cross the border. She is worried about how much it will cost for her family of three to replace the documents. However, the real ordeal has to do with the fact that, in order to replace the visa, she first has, she says, to “strengthen up her whole existence”. This is, in fact,

when disciplinary measures actually start touching upon personal career choices, social relationships and status of citizenship.

More than just showing up at the U.S. Consulate, Laureana must, in order to replace her visa, to redefine her relationship with her landlady, who has rented the apartment where she lives for nearly 10 years without a contract, other than that of friendship. However, consular functionaries at the Consulate may ask her for evidence that she indeed lives where she says, and she has no way to prove it. Holder of a professional degree, Laureana quit her job with a government office to re-start the family business, a small neighborhood *papelería* located in an annex to her parent's house. As the business takes off, they live on savings and of her husband's income, but she is worried that in her situation, she will not be found eligible for a visa. Usually, consular agents demand that the person has held a job for at least a year, regardless of the level of the position or the wages. Being at a moment of starting a business, it is uncertain that she will be affluent enough, despite the fact that she was born in Tijuana and lived there her whole life.

There is more paperwork she needs to do. Her voting card still shows an old address, so she faces hours of standing in line at the local IFE² office in order to update it. Because bureaucratic paperwork is lengthy and inefficient, people in Mexico tend to avoid it and official IDs usually do not reflect recent changes in a person's life, like a new residence. Laureana's car is also under someone else's name, and she now has to process the change in order to prove U.S. officials that she indeed owns a vehicle, which implies one, two or three days of bureaucratic paperwork, waiting in

² IFE stands for *Instituto Federal Electoral*, the Mexican agency that issues voting cards to all citizens.

line for hours and perhaps having to bribe an individual behind a window in order to complete the process. Furthermore, in order for people to feel confident about their applications they need to provide consular agents with some sort of residential and work stability, which is often documented by a social security form (the so called “pink form”). The pink form indicates that the employer has registered a worker with the social security, so that the applicant is part of the national system of social rights. Not all employers can afford to register their workers with the social security, so by asking to see the pink form, agents are by default expecting that the applicant works for a well established business. Indeed, some businesses do register their workers, but with smaller salaries than what they actually receive, in order to pay less in benefits. People who are self employed, own a small business (like Laureana), or work as domestic servants have no access to the pink form.

In Laureana’s case, as in many others, the issue of obtaining entry documents to the United States goes beyond the simple act of fulfilling the requirements of affluence to qualify, which can be a challenge itself. There needs to be a clear status of citizenship, all paperwork needs to be updated, so that it is possible to keep a statistical record of people that allows administrators to track, classify, and register. This, in essence, is how this disciplinary grid operates among Tijuana residents and I will discuss it in further detail as I move on in this chapter. In Foucault’s words: “Whereas the juridical systems define juridical subjects according to universal norms, the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize: they distribute along a scale and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate” (Foucault, 1977, p.223).

Along with the physical enforcement of the border that I previously described, these technologies of control help establish a semi-permeable border that creates new channels of inequality in an already deeply divided world” (Wonders, 2006, p.74). For the purposes of this work, facts and perceptions are equally relevant. Ultimately, it is up to the discretion of consular agents to grant or deny a visa. The version is always the same: the applicant needs to prove that he or she has a credible reason to return after a visit to the United States. However, this guideline is subject to endless interpretations, and many, like Laureana, just fall into the gutters, despite the fact that she has lived in Tijuana her whole life and has no intention to change that. In this, it is relevant to point out Toni Payan’s reflections about narco-juniors, the children of drug traffickers who often spend their parents’ money in the United States:

(...) the children of the large drug traffickers do study and travel extensively throughout the United States. They attend colleges and universities and shop at the most expensive malls in large U.S. cities. They drive luxurious cars and spend money lavishly. None of them seem to have trouble obtaining visas to enter the United States. This is partly because the fact that a visa-issuing process in American consulates in Mexico place an inordinate importance on the number of zeros that the bank account of the visa applicant has. It is nearly sufficient to show a bulky bank account to obtain a visa to travel and study in the United States (Payan, 2006, p.48).

Regardless of the accuracy of this argument –one could always say that there is no “evidence” of this- what is relevant for the purposes of this paper is to discuss the perceptions among Tijuana residents about the real versus the official criteria that are used in the visa granting process. During my conversations with Laureana, she at some point assessed her chances for replacing her visa. Her business might pose a problem, her bank account was not in the greatest shape...but who knows, after all, she said “no

estoy tan prieta” (I am not so dark skinned). This last comment reminded me of my white-skinned neighbor of European descent, who obtained a visa without much trouble. Interestingly, her husband’s co-workers comments all gravitated along the lines of “can you believe how racist they are?” Their remarks made me think about how this system of standards to regulate people’s mobility, designed so many miles away from the border itself, is interpreted and translated on the southern side of the fence as one of exclusion, based on traditional categories of class and race, with an impact, like in these cases, on the way people see themselves and others.

During my stay in Tijuana, I heard of many reasons for denying a visa. Anecdotes about visa denials are an essential part of everyday conversations and constitute omnipresent urban myths. They blend into people’s collective imagination and no doubt they are also exaggerated and modified as they travel by word of mouth. Together with what they see happening to the border landscape, these rumors add to a series of narratives that reflect the confusion and impotence that is shared by local residents. Many of these stories have in common that they show disturbingly intrusive practices, almost as if the consular agents were arrogating to themselves the power of regulating people’s lives: A middle class lady in her sixties who was born in Tijuana and has a daughter living in Chula Vista was denied the visa because her husband did not make “enough” money and she was told by the consul it was now “her daughter’s turn to visit her instead”. A good looking nurse was rejected because “you are very pretty and you are a nurse, so if I give you the visa you will find a job in San Diego and stay there”. A rebellious upper middle class teenager, who decided to take a “sabbatical” between middle school and high school, was told she needed to do

something “productive” with her life if she wanted a visa, despite the fact that her family complied easily with all the requirements and she was still underage.

Even if they are not citizens of the U.S., Tijuana residents are still bound to United States law in a sense, and they are “punished” and “rewarded” in an almost paternal relationship by the U.S-government. As an immigration official said once in an informative meeting about the laser visa:

people in Tijuana need to realize that having entry documents is not a right, it is a privilege they obtain if they are good, they have their stuff in order, they don't break the law, they then can go to San Diego do some nice shopping, spend the day with the family at the recreation parks. But they need to understand that if they misbehave, that privilege is going to be taken away from them (my translation from Spanish).

So, by denying or allowing entrance to border residents from the southern side, State territoriality and power is, at the border, also exerted over citizens who are not those of the United States, but who feel it in the intimate sphere of their daily lives, as their freedom of movement through the space where they live is regulated and subject to new systems of access, as well as to a series of policies and discursive practices they cannot even begin to understand.

The impact of these policies on people is of course very divisive. As they are denied the possibility of moving, families are torn apart on both sides of the border. I once chatted with a taxi driver who was born and raised in Tijuana, and was denied a laser visa. He applied with his whole family. The consul granted the visa to his wife and children but denied it to him, because “you want to move there with your family and work”. “So now”, he complained “my wife and kids go shopping to the other side on the weekends and they leave me here all alone”. When I asked him what it felt like

not to be able to cross the border, he gave me an answer that kept me thinking for days: “Just imagine...I’ve lived in this region all my life, came and went as I pleased. It is like they tied my hands up; I feel it in my body”. To me, his comment revealed a way in which the State exerts its territorial power not only over the land, but also upon the bodies that inhabit the borderlands. It is through restrictive disciplinary regimes that rely on resources such as the laser visa, that the bodies of borderlanders become the mobile (and immobile) sites where “claims of sovereignty and aspirations of nationhood” are written, by practices designed to subject them to the authority that the State tries to enforce (Donnan and Wilson, 1999, p.130).

But even people who are considered eligible to cross the border are subject, in small and subtle ways; to constant reminders that the “other side” is not home, which also contributes to de-naturalizing border crossings. If in the past, a visa was close to expiration, holders would apply for a new one at the Consulate and were given a card or some sort of document that allowed them to continue crossing while the new one was ready. Now, the applicant has to wait for a period of two to eight weeks without being able to go to San Diego, until the new document is sent to the person’s home through a courier service, even if the old card still covers that period of time. This way, people who are only doing a routine renewal, are denied entrance during the time a new card is issued and sent.

For a mother taking kids to school or a person that takes care of a relative on “the other side”, this is definitely a problem. People then have to rely on social networks to continue their daily business. When an acquaintance of mine had to wait for her new laser visa in Tijuana, she asked friends and relatives to drive her kids to

school. After the first credit card bill arrived, her thrilled husband declared that her wife's temporary lack of mobility was having a very positive impact on the household's finances, since her expenses dramatically fell. The news soon spread among other men in the neighborhood, and it became a common joke among them, of how asking the Consulate to deny their wives a visa would be a great business decision.

Intimidated by the cost, the hassle, and the perception of inaccessibility, which sometimes entails self-disqualification and fear of being considered too poor, or too dark-skinned, or both, many people also decided to not go through the trouble and not to replace their old crossing cards. These perceptions were nurtured by cases of people who were denied a laser visa when turning in their old *micas*. I met one of these people, who after completing a masters degree, worked at a Migrant shelter. Usually, these social workers attend meetings on both sides of the border, as they coordinate with both local and U.S. authorities around logistical issues related to the treatment and repatriation of migrants. However, their salaries are modest. Eventually, this person lost her job and ended up relocating to Mexico City. Cases like this one made others shy away from the application process. This is the case of one of my low income informants, who did not hear about the new policy, despite the fact that it was massively publicized by U.S. authorities, and when she tried to cross the border to visit a relative, had her visa taken away. She was told that she could cross one more time, but then would have to apply for a laser visa. She never did, but she does not regret it, since she says she has no longer a need for crossing the border, as you can now "find everything you need" in Tijuana.

The “denaturalization of cross-border movement” not only applies to Mexicans, as U.S. Citizens are gradually incorporated into this process. In compliance with the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, U.S. authorities have been announcing they will require their citizens to show a passport upon crossing through the ports of entry. They have postponed the measure on several occasions, but are “educating” people about the need to obtain this travel document. So far, oral declarations of citizenship are no longer acceptable, and everybody needs to provide a proof of citizenship, with a birth certificate or a government issued ID. The new deadline to obtain a visa was June of 2009, and the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana has already seen an increase in visa daily applications from 20 to 35 or more (Sánchez, 2008). Very soon, these new documents will also be equipped with biometric technologies, in this case a chip, with data about each individual.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, both visas and passports are devices that enable the State to exert the legitimate monopoly of movement over citizens of both countries. As I have shown here, such control relies on the capacity to identify people, determine their legal relationship with the and adjudicate, accordingly, the spatial attributions of each individual. At the border, these documents are serving the purpose of ID cards, which have been historically opposed in the United States for the challenges they pose for democracy (Lyon, 2005). Identification ultimately eases the management and policing of the border, which in the words of David Lyon, “turns out to facilitate extensive social, economic and political categorization within emerging processes of control and governance” (Lyon, 2005, p.67).

5.3 Smart Borders and the Partnership of Technology and Discourse Post 9/11

Despite the fact that it had little to do with the September 11 events of 2001, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center had a great impact on the U.S.-Mexico border. Very soon, decision-makers blamed the failure to deter these tragic events on immigration procedures, cross-border commercial practices, and the openness of the border (Payan, 2006, p.13). During the first hours, the border was shut down completely, producing an overall slowdown in commercial activities, a temporary separation of families and absences in the work place. In the long term, however, the strike produced a massive imbalance in the cross-border agenda toward security issues, leading to sharp unilateral policies to harden sea, air and land borders (Ganster and Lorey, 2008, p.201).

After September 11, the securitization of the agenda tied the notions of criminology and borders together. According to this new logic, unauthorized migration and drug smuggling were now considered to be not only a *crime* as previously established by IIRIRA, but also a *threat* to national security. Moreover, U.S. borders started been seen as a conduit for terrorist movement (Ackleson, 2003, p.59 and Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.1). This move manifested both institutionally and financially first with the birth of the Department of Homeland Security that incorporated all in one, those agencies that dealt with Immigration (Immigration and Naturalization Service) and Drug Trafficking (Drug Enforcement Administration) into the rest of the “intelligence community”. Second, there were, once more, dramatic budget increases to border security and surveillance agencies, reaching a total of 7 billion dollars in 2006 (Payan, 2006, p.14). In addition, the National Intelligence

Reform Act of 2005 included a request for 10 thousand more Border Patrol agents (Payan, 2006, p.18).

How did these changes translate into the day to day at the border? The impact on everyday life has been tremendous, tangibly and intangibly. Just a few months after September 11, in January of 2002, the Bush administration launched a program named “Smart Borders”, designed to screen for terrorist incursions into the United States at air and land ports of entry. By and large, Smart Borders contemplated the hiring of additional agents, new technologies of surveillance, an exit tracking system to monitor the arrival and departure of non-citizens, and what was called “enhanced border inspection”: additional inspectors, canine teams and x-ray machines to screen people entering by land and high risk cargo (U.S. Department of State, 2002).

The Smart Borders initiative both nourished and reflected discourses that saw in border crossings a threat to national security. It was also the continuation, in a more refined and perfected fashion, of the initial steps to install a selective border, which accompanied NAFTA. Regarding this, Jason Ackleson quotes a speech by President George W. Bush, in which he said that Smart Borders posed “little or no obstacle to the legitimate trade and travel...(while) keep(ing) pace with expanding trade while protecting the United States from the threats of terrorist attack, illegal immigration, illegal drugs, and other contraband” (Bush quoted in Ackleson, 2003, p.64).

Smart Borders continued at a more intense scale the employment of cutting edge technology as a tool to enhance the State’s dual capabilities of “enforcement and facilitation”. Accordingly, this initiative consolidated what Ackleson called “a marriage between security discourse and technology”. In his words:

U.S. borders are both barriers and bridges to many transnational flows, including trade, migrants, narcotics, terrorists, and weapons. Border security policy is constructed in response to defined threats, policy goals and limitations. ‘Constructed’ in this context refers not only how physical security such as agents, fortifications, surveillance, and the like –are deployed but also to the nature of the social environment in which actors, like government elites and federal agencies, formulate solutions and then take actions against perceived ‘threats’ or ‘risks’ (Ackleson, 2003, pp.57-58).

On a more pragmatic level, the use of technologies such as biometrics and inter-linked information technology data bases became instrumental to “identify problematic entrants –either persons or cargo (e.g., terrorists and their weapons) – while at the same time facilitating the quick entry of legitimate goods and travelers” (Ackleson, 2003, p.57). Generally speaking, biometrics is a “digital representation of physiological features unique to an individual” (Wilson, 1998, p.90), such as face, fingerprints, hand geometry, and retinal and voice features (Ackleson, 2003, p.66). With biometrics the body itself becomes a source of information about an individual (Muller, 2005, p.99). It is used to “test true claims, and to measure possible deviations from the norm” (Lewis, 2005, p.100). Usually, biometric technology is linked to data bases that store information about individuals and that can be accessed by more than one agency. This is the case, for instance, of US-VISIT, a system that screens all foreign visitors to the United States, which is now available at U.S. consular offices overseas, airports and some ports of entry, including San Ysidro and Otay Mesa. Upon arrival, people go through digital finger scans and photographs that are collected and checked against a general database.

There are also technologies developed first in a military context that when applied at the border often blend into the everyday crossing of people. For instance,

alarms are triggered when a person who has gone through radiation cancer treatments approaches the gate. As a “contaminated” vehicle positions itself next to the inspection booth, sensors send a signal to the inspector’s computer screen, who in turn asks the crosser if he or she has undergone any treatment that involves radiation or contrast imagery. The vehicle is then sent to secondary inspection where it is searched. In these cases, people are prompted to carry with them evidence of a surgery, and show it to agents upon crossing.

The ports of entry also have installed tracking mechanisms to collect data on vehicles and people entering and leaving the country. For this purpose, license plates readers were installed on both directions, to help determine patterns of movement among border crossers. Evidence on individuals crossing in a given direction at a specific hour can help indicate a violation of U.S. law. For example, the movement of a U.S. permanent resident, who lives in Tijuana but works in San Diego, is tracked at the moment of crossing northwards every morning, putting the person at risk of losing this status. Likewise, a Mexican citizen with a tourist card, who regularly crosses to San Diego at a specific time, may be detected as someone who is working without authorization in the United States. As a result there is, in Tijuana, an endless repertory of rumors about people who are confronted with photographs and other evidence that indicate some sort of violation when applying for U.S. citizenship, visas or any other sort of document.

I have mentioned before that the hybrid character of borderlanders and the fact that many combine features of identity from both countries, made it difficult at the port of entry to make distinctions among them. I have also noted that this inevitably

challenges the ability of States to identify persons of “their own” from others (Torpey, 2000, p.2). Along these lines, it is remarkable that, even if dual citizenship has been tolerated in the case of other nationalities, the issue became subject of close scrutiny in a Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, in September of 2005. Making explicit reference to Mexico, dual citizenship was addressed during this debate in terms of the concerns “foreign attachments” caused to national security (“Dual Citizenship”, 2005, pp.1-5). According to the report, dual citizenship brings a foreign dimension to membership in a political community, mostly because of the issue of voting, the bonding implications, and the conflict of interests it entails. In other words, dual citizenship hinders the possibility to establish a difference between “us” and “them”, making it necessary to introduce a classification system, or taxonomy that helps make and enforce these distinctions.

In their book about the power of classification, Leigh Starr and Geoffrey Bowker described a taxonomy that during decades divided people in South Africa according to their racial features. These taxonomies, they say, are “little machines for classifying and separating categories” (Starr and Bowker, 1999, p.202). In a similar fashion to the case examined by these authors, behind the technologies and infrastructures put together to secure control of the border, there is in fact a taxonomy, or a classificatory system, to make sure that everybody stays where they “belong”, according to standards adjudicated by U.S. law that are contingent on place of birth, citizenship or legal status. After all, classification systems are, say Starr and Bowker, integral to every working infrastructure (Starr and Bowker, 1999). In this fashion, biometric technologies effectively provide the full picture of a crosser’s biography, not

precisely in terms of race, but in relation to their location in the spectrum of national law. As I will discuss below, these systems have helped impose a hierarchical order upon border societies that are substantiated by various modalities of movement.

In sum, I have argued so far that the urge to classify borderlanders has led to the use of biometric technologies, because they provide the State with the technical tools to read off the body, crucial in the task of controlling movement, which is considered to be “one of the rationalities of government” (Burchel, Gordon and Miller, 1991, p.3). Moreover, these technologies enhance the disciplinary power of the State by facilitating the individual identification of border crossers, which in turn helps determine spatial attributions according to the *rank* or place a person occupies in this classification (Foucault, 1977, p.145).

The effectiveness of the Smart Borders infrastructure to prevent acts of terrorism remains unclear. However, it has revealed an enormous rhetorical and symbolic appeal (Ackleson, 2003, p.70) that is comparable to the symbolic uses of border enforcement described by Andreas. On the one hand, he notes, technology is a symbol of what is a “significant part of the larger modern narrative of faith and progress through innovation (...)” (Ackleson, 2003, p.70). On the other hand, cutting edge technology has become an expression of State power, and its ability to control cross-border movement. Yet, the impact of this for border communities goes with no doubt beyond the symbolic, as it has instrumented a new regime of exclusion that is substantiated in the selectivity of the border. As I will explain below, this regime relies upon the constant surveillance of every individual that crosses the border.

People who cross the border through the ports of entry do so for a variety of reasons, in many cases as part of a daily routine as they attend school, work or shop. While doing so, some actually violate the spatial attributions conceded to them by law. Some do not. However, in order to discern violators from potential terrorists, and criminals from “everyday crossers”, there is an increasing standardization of procedures that blur the boundaries between threatening activities and practices of everyday life. This is what happens, for instance, to students.

After September 11, people who at some point have attended a higher education institution are subject to intensive screening. At the border, it now seems to be standard procedure that, at least once, they are sent to secondary inspection. Having to comply with this requirement myself, I by chance had to witness the violent arrest of the people who were standing before me in line. When my turn came, the agents were breaking in SAVIS, a new system to identify students and former students that was designed after September 11, and my name was run against that data base. After answering a few questions that gradually moved from an accusatory tone to a routine compliance procedure, I was kindly dismissed. Still shaken by the arrest, I wondered why people “like me”, who was at the moment on my way to Sea World, had to be exposed to those incidents. Why was there not a different facility for potential criminals or terrorists? I then realized that, for the limited time I had spent in secondary inspection, I myself had become a suspect, a potential threat to national security.

Like me, many residents of Tijuana learned the hard way that their everyday habit of crossing the border has indeed become a suspicious activity. Every person

whogoes through the port of entry seems to now be considered guilty until she or he demonstrates her or himself to be innocent (Payan, 2006, p.110). The securitization of the agenda and the technologies of control (both physical and discursive) that have been implemented to restrict and regulate border crossings, have in fact invested everyday life at the border with a connotation of illegality, which justifies the close monitoring of *all* individuals, without distinction. Accordingly, everyday life at the border has become in itself potentially threatening and therefore an object of constant vigilance.

This approach has prompted scholars like Toni Payan to compare the U.S. border with a foucauldian panopticon (Payan, 2006, p.115). As Foucault said, forms of punishment and surveillance were destined more than to rehabilitate prisoners, to exercise the power of the State to control society. This is taking place at the ports of entry that connect San Diego and Tijuana, not only among those members of society that live within U.S. borders but on those who reside beyond them as well, and not only with those targeted or prosecuted by the law, but with every border crosser. It is through these mechanisms that territoriality beyond borders is exerted. The panopticon border of the twenty first century is therefore outlining a scenario “where everyone is under surveillance at all times, where everyone is tracked in every move, where everyone can be brought under the swift control of the government” (Payan, 2006, p.114).

I had never seen myself as a potential threat before. This new identity, temporarily imposed on me during my stay at secondary inspection, has rapidly permeated public discourse in the United States, producing a deep cleavage between

the way people living in Mexican border cities see themselves, and the way they are seen on “the other side”. This gap contributes to strengthen boundaries and perceptions of “otherness” between those living in the north and south of the fence, as well as within each of the two sides. In the last part of this chapter, I will explain in further detail how such boundaries blend in to the local universe of identities shared by those living in Tijuana. Finally, in the next chapter, I will discuss how these identities travel south of the border and are translated and adopted in social relations, as they become part of the everyday lives of local residents.

5.4 Architectures of Difference: Hybrid, Foreign, Local Identities, and the Boundary Between Consumers and Laborers

So far, I have discussed how the marriage between technology and discourse has materialized in biometric technologies, as well as other technologies of power, that involve the individual classification of border crossers through identification systems such as the laser visa. I have also pointed out how these systems act upon the bodies of border crossers, as part of a new pattern of exclusion and access (Fields, 2008) that regulates people’s mobility and other practices of everyday life. I will now address another aspect of these technologies that has to do with the role such systems of differentiation play in constructing the identity of local bodies.

At the border “narratives and representation of territoriality and identity changed under the new American politics of border control, as the new normative patterns of exclusion and identity that are being fostered discourage the development of an ‘integrated’ borderland or binational community” (Ackleson, 2000, p.157). Along

these lines, the Tijuana-San Diego border exemplifies a process of territorialization of identity, where the latter is increasingly shaped by categories established and imposed by the state, that were not so pervasive before, but that are being essential in a process of establishing disciplinary and territorial control.

In other places of the world, the relationship between territorial and national identity has sometimes taken space-free forms, nurtured by Diasporas and national communities that are not territorially bound (See for instance Fitzgerald, 2002 and 2000). Instead, as I have shown, territory in the Tijuana-San Diego border is being used as an agent of control, spatial ordering, and social sorting (Salter, 2005, p.43, Lyon, 2005, p.67 and Lewis, 2005, p.101). It is indeed an intrinsic element in a classification system that relies on continued territorial compartmentalization and separation (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.24). Such a system relies on mechanisms of control through which “identity is socially constructed and imposed upon constituents” (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.24).

Spatial scale is an important dimension in the understanding of territorial identities. Just as the individual belongs to diverse social and economic groups, so too does the individual live and function within a number of overlapping spaces within which different identities take on concrete expressions, and are demarcated by boundaries which may be more or less permeable (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.29.) As I will discuss extensively in the remaining sections of this dissertation, identities in Tijuana are influenced by different constructions of space, in which people’s mobility play a part. In other words, there is a growing territorial segregation (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.29), that enforces and reflects social differences, since “for as long as the

segregated functions of social and economic groups remain in place, they will always take place within some form of nested territorial hierarchy” (Pratt and Brown, 2000, p.29). After all, boundary maintenance goes hand in hand with efforts to reproduce inequalities across space (Nevins, 2002, p.186).

In Tijuana-San Diego the infrastructures and technologies I have described here come hand in hand with a more subtle architecture of difference that touches upon people’s identity and the way they are seen and see others, which determines and is determined by their circulation across space. In Nevins’ words, “the making of the boundary in the area of San Diego and Tijuana was not merely a process of building up in a physical sense. Just as on the national scales, it was needed to construct social boundaries between those who belong and those who did not”. Along with the intensification of boundary enforcement, there is a “reification both in the physical and ideological senses of the U.S.-Mexico border over time” (Nevins, 2002, p.92).

These developments “are a manifestation of a shift from the divide being a border or a zone of transition within which there is a common culture, to a boundary that represents a linear demarcation between “us” and “them” both territorially and socially” (Nevins, 2002, p.93). As a result, the border has turned into a boundary, which represents an increasing emphasis on difference (Nevins, 2002, p.158). In Tijuana, such difference is, in fact, materialized in the capacity or incapacity to move, which authors like Zygmunt Bauman believe has become the dominant new form of social stratification in the global scene, and a powerful mediator of social inclusion and exclusion (Bauman in Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.7).

The territorial demarcation of us and them that Nevins addresses, exemplifies the fact that globally, “the opportunities of global mobility are not opening up equally to all the occupants of the planet” (Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.7). These processes are producing an “immobilized ‘global underclass’ (Pickering and Weber, 2006, p.8). The idea that transnational mobility is “smooth, painless and almost instantaneous” (Urry in Pickering and Weber) that became so common during the first wave of globalization scholarship, is now being subject to careful consideration, as inequalities of access become more and more pervasive. In fact, some authors even argue that the “transnational mobility of some is achieved at the cost of the relative immobility or entrapment of others” producing what they call a “global apartheid” (see Rogers in Pickering and Weber, 2006, pp.7-9.)

This has fostered binary distinctions that affect both people and places. Such binaries are created by the state and reinforced by capital, and they manifest themselves through the creation of environments for consumption, regulation of some minorities, the promotion of family and the policing of national boundaries (Sibley, 2001, p.247.) In Tijuana-San Diego, they illustrate the great impact of State power over people’s daily life, as the space in which they conduct their daily business is partitioned in half. Intrinsic activities of everyday life, like consumption, become a function of the classificatory systems I have described in this chapter, according to which each individual fits differently. To visit friends, shop, go to school, work, are part of a list that is divided into those activities that are allowed to some, but not others. This is why, along with the question of “where were you born”, another

favorite mode of interrogation at the port of entry is “*A qué va?*” (What is the purpose of your trip?)

But, what is the logic behind the differences between those who enjoy the freedom of transnational mobility and those who are denied access? In her article about tourists and migrants, Nancy Wonders talks about how systems of access have been crafted around the world to facilitate the mobility of tourists while seriously hindering the transit of migrants. In her view, the popular mind constructs migrants as individuals who are “disproportionately poor, economically needy, dark-skinned, from the global south, and increasingly female”. Tourists, as counterparts, are expected to be wealthy, white, from Europe or other “western” countries, and predominantly male (Wonders, 2006, p.75). In her words: “Whether trying to keep people out or helping them come in, border officials must rely heavily on strategies like race and class profiling, and individualized conceptions of risk and harm when doing their jobs. Where these policies are not officially sanctioned, the impetus for such profiling remains strong” (Wonders 2006, p.80).

If Wonder’s distinction does not necessarily operate in full at the U.S.-Mexico border, where gender, race and class are bundled in more subtle, complex and intricate ways, it is clear that at the logic of the selective border has made what Soja called “the lure of binarism” a lot stronger, as well as the practice of sorting and dividing people into simplified categories becomes more evident (Soja quoted in Sibley, 2001, p.247). There is, in fact, a binary system of differentiation at the U.S.-Mexico border that goes along the lines of Wonder’s demarcation between tourists and migrants: the distinction between consumers and workers.

While the previously described legal taxonomy has imposed binaries mostly tied to the *identification* of people (citizens-aliens, legal-illegal, has documents-lacks documents) the division between consumers and workers directly affects and reflects the *identity* of those living in the border region. In foucauldian terms, “the human body enters here the spatial machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (Foucault, quoted in Shields, 1991, p.40). The identity of this body is reformulated from its self attached identity to a new one given by the state, and each category is given certain attributes of mobility. These identities do open space for stereotypes that, touching indeed upon issues of gender, race and class, influence who is perceived to cross the border to consume, and who is instead, presumably doing it to work with no authorization in the United States.

It is no surprise that, in the context of U.S.-Mexican economic relations, NAFTA’s exclusion of labor outlined a process through which the work involved in the production of goods, and the consumption of such goods, have been artificially abstracted out of the whole social scheme (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p.4). Evidently, such categories have contributed significantly to the shaping of social space (Soja quoted in Sibley, 2001, p.247). According to this logic, it is likely that the affluent European looking lady who drives a new S.U.V, manufactured in Mexico, with license plates of Baja California will be branded as a consumer, while an indigenous looking man, driving an old imported car, with border license plates, will more likely be taken for a worker³. I first heard of this from an acquaintance, a

³ Because imported cars are significantly more affordable, it is a sign of status, at the border, to drive a car with Mexican license plates.

wealthy artist involved in projects on both sides of the border. She mentioned to me how offensive she found that, particularly close to the Christmas season, she was constantly asked by agents if she was also “going shopping”.

Aside from Laureana’s experience, who assessed her chances of being able to replace her visa in terms of the color of her skin, or my European looking neighbor who, according to her husband’s co-workers, obtained her document easily because they are “so racist”, I can’t help but remembering the case of a young man with accentuated indigenous features, who attended a local university. Because he was consistently targeted by inspectors at the border every time he and his peers went to the “other side” to attend a concert or patronize a bar, it became a joke among his circle of friends that nobody wanted to ride in the same car with him. His sole presence would, in this case, automatically trigger delays, additional interrogations, and very possible, an inconvenient forced stop at secondary inspection.

According to Toni Payan:

A quick interview with border crossers at various points of the border revealed that they are generally afraid of the arbitrariness with which an inspector often decides to pick on a given person. They also believe that they pick on a border crosser based on “the way he dresses”, or “the way he looks”, or “the way he moves”. Very often, border crossers are not given reasons for their detention and questioning. They are kept in the dark (Payan, 2006, p.110).

In fact, the lack of transparency of standards, criteria and procedures, turns the system of infrastructures and technologies of power and surveillance at the border into the tip of an iceberg, the visible fragment of an invisible system of control that occasionally becomes evident when it is used against particular individuals. However, what it is in fact possible to discuss, are the ways in which such patterns translate into

the everyday lives of people living south of the border, and the boundaries erected among them. If I will discuss this in further detail later, it is relevant to remember Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, when they argued that “the choice of goods continuously creates certain patterns of discrimination, overlaying and reinforcing others: Goods then are the visible part of our culture” (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p.66). In Tijuana, the differences between those who “cross” and those who don’t have throughout the years become increasingly evident in neighborhoods and families. Regarding this, Leonardo Sánchez, a well known border intellectual, recalls that, among the working class neighbors of his childhood, those who went to “the other side” were the *barrio*’s aristocrats, because of the diversity and quality of the products they could access.

5.5 Different Modalities of Movement: Waiting in Line and the SENTRI Lane

I have discussed so far some of the impacts the physical, legal and virtual architectures built at the Tijuana-San Diego border to secure the territorial control of the State have in the everyday lives of borderlanders. I have mostly focused on how the conditions patterns of cross-border movement in Tijuana, which in turn influence how local residents organize their everyday life regarding “the other side”, as well as the ways in which people see and identify themselves in relation to others and in terms of the space they inhabit. It should be pointed out, however, that in this discussion, it is very important to consider how these mechanisms have altered the relation between time and distance.

5.5.1 *Queues at the border and the changing relationship between time and distance.*

Time is socially constructed, as well as distance, and the uses of time and space are sharply differentiated as well as differentiating in today's world (Bauman, 1998, p.2). These differences manifest themselves in part by the opposition between "near" and "far". "Near" is a space inside, which one can feel *chez soi*, at home, as opposed to far away, where one enters only occasionally or not at all, a space containing things one knows little about (Bauman, 1998, p.13). All of the old residents I interviewed for this project have a recollection of a border that was much easier to cross, first because there were a lot less restrictions, but second, because it could be done much faster, so the enterprise of going to the "other side" would not take a substantial part of a person's day. As I discussed in the first chapter, "The other side" was near.

Gradually, this has changed, becoming as acute as ever in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, with the policies of border control that came as a result of this fatidic episode, as well with an undeniable increase in flows, due to the growing interaction that NAFTA promotes. According to a report produced by the San Diego Association of Governments that measures the impact of waits in the local economy: "Nowadays, congestion at border crossings between San Diego County and Baja California causes more delay and travel time uncertainty for cars, trucks and pedestrians than at any time in history" (SANDAG, 2006, p.vi). Sometimes queues are so long, that cars waiting in line actually block a substantial part of the city's main streets, mostly towards the area of *Zona Rio* (See Map 3), hindering traffic even for

those who do not have the intention of traveling to “the other side”. Particularly on the weekends and early morning of regular weekdays, people are getting used to sitting in their cars for two and even three hours before making it across. Some commuters, in fact, show up at the border at two and three in the morning and sleep in their cars until the gates are open at 4 (See Chávez, 2007, p.105) . For all the people who undergo this ordeal the “other side” is becoming, in Bauman’s terms, very far away.

Locally, this change manifests itself in diverse ways. Local magazines often include articles about possible activities to do while waiting, and *De Volada*, a local coffee chain that has adopted the model of Starbucks, recently opened a franchise at the border itself, where coffee and muffins are delivered to the cars waiting in line. There are toll free telephone numbers that provide updated information about the wait at the border, under the auspices of private sponsors. Newspapers post waiting times in their websites, and Television and Radio stations often report on the length of the queues, which on the Mexican side is measured by the number of cars that are standing in line, as opposed to an estimate of minutes or hours. In the popular mind, it all depends on the mood of the agent, which is perceived to be as unpredictable as the climate itself. No wonder why in the news, the wait at the border is often reported as part of the weather forecast. Lately, some English speaking stations from the San Diego side, like National Public Radio, have started reporting on wait times as well, but they prefer to offer an estimate in minutes, as opposed to the bizarre but accurate counting of cars.

Indeed, after a while of living at the border, I got fairly familiar with those measures myself. Fifty cars, which in the mid nineties was considered to be a very long cue, is now close to nothing, an equivalent of a half an hour that can always fluctuate, depending on how meticulous inspections are at a particular lane or moment of the day. One hundred and twenty cars often break the threshold of the sixty minutes, which nowadays sounds fairly attractive, as it is not uncommon to hear about queues of three hundred and even five hundred vehicles. This has severely hindered practices that in the past were fairly common, like crossing the border to pour gas or do laundry, which I mentioned in the first chapter. Even the most stubborn *Tijuanenses*, who continue their crossing to buy butter or milk because they prefer the taste, clothes because they are “nicer” and cheaper, or just to visit a relative or a friend, are confronted with the fact that once they finally make their way to “the other side”, they will have consumed a significant amount of gas and spent a large portion of their day sitting in their car or standing in line. In the words of an anonymous email entitled “You are from Tijuana if...” that circulated a few years ago: “You are from Tijuana if a big chunk of your life is spent sitting and waiting for an idiot in blue to ask you: ‘what are you bringing from Mexico’”.

However, even if waiting is considered to be part of the border condition, many have gradually succumbed to the lure of PEMEX or Mexican cookies that, as I explained in the previous chapters, are more available and affordable nowadays. In the aforementioned SANDAG report, a survey was conducted on a sample of 3,754 border crossers from the ports of entry of San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Tecate to assess the estimated loss caused by long waits at the border. From the sample, 70.7 percent of

respondents lived in Mexico and 19.3 in the U.S, and 63 percent of the Mexican residents responded they were crossing the border to do shopping or run errands (SANDAG, 2006, p.77). For San Diego County only, this report estimated trip delays produce a loss of 2,259 million dollars in production and 31,454 lost jobs (SANDAG, 2006, p.xi). From reduced spending in retail, recreation and entertainment and food and lodging by residents of Mexico in the state of California, SANDAG reported a loss of 2,480 million dollars in output and 31,423 jobs (SANDAG, 2006, p.xii). When it comes to Mexico, reduced spending of people crossing from the northern side of the border in the same items represented a much smaller loss, of 169 million dollars and 1,367 jobs.

5.5.2 The privilege of movement: the SENTRI lane and the purification of citizenship.

Very much in response to the actions of stakeholders that I have addressed earlier, authorities agreed in the mid nineties on the establishment of a dedicated commuter lane at the Tijuana-San Diego border. Since then, the SENTRI lanes facilitate expedite crossing from the Mexican to the U.S. side. SENTRI was designed as an infrastructural solution, to resolve what Andreas called the predicament facing U.S. policymakers that “their promotion of borderless economies based on free market principles in many ways contradicts and undermines their efforts to keep borders closed to the clandestine movement of drugs and migrant labor” (Peter Andreas, 1996, p.51). The program started in the Otay Mesa Port of Entry, in 2005, primarily for the benefit of top maquiladora and other industries’ managers, who lived in San Diego and worked in the Tijuana plants. Gradually, SENTRI got expanded first to those

going to school, shopping or who had family in San Diego. Nowadays, it is open to everybody and a person does not even need to live at the border to be eligible. By and large, SENTRI users have access to much faster lanes. This infrastructure of course includes the extensive use of cutting edge biometric technology in the pre-screening process of those who participate in the program. According to the Customs

Department's website:

SENTRI provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved low-risk travelers. Applicants must voluntarily undergo a thorough biographical background check against criminal law enforcement, customs, immigration, and terrorist indices, a 10 fingerprint law enforcement check, and a personal interview with a CBP Officer (U.S. Customs, 2007).

Once applicants are approved, they are issued a Radio Frequency Identification Card (RFID) that will match their record and status in the CBP database upon arrival at the U.S. port of entry. The cards have color codes to identify the citizenship of the person carrying them: blue for Americans, green for Mexicans, and so on, for every other nationality. When an approved international traveler approaches, the system automatically detects the vehicle and the identity of its occupants. This is done through a transponder that reads a file number, and then sends the participant's data to the inspection officer's computer screen. The data is then stored in a database. Simultaneously, "license plate readers and computers perform queries of the vehicles and their occupants against law enforcement databases that are continuously updated. A combination of electric gates, tire shredders, traffic control lights, fixed iron bollards, and pop-up pneumatic bollards ensure physical control of border crossers and their vehicles" (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2007).

Being a member of the SENTRI program is considered to be a privilege, and the inspectors in charge of the orientation to new members never hesitate to repeat it, as they instruct people on the procedures they need to follow in order to participate. Applications must be done online. Even if the cost can be considered moderate, 129 dollars for a period of five years, it is still costly for the average income in Tijuana, particularly if we consider a family of four. In addition, people in the program need to have U.S. insurance in their cars, although lately, it is also possible for pedestrians to obtain a SENTRI card that will allow them to ride in a vehicle that is already in the program.

According to the official criteria of eligibility:

A SENTRI applicant must not have any penalties, violations, arrests, convictions or pending law enforcement investigations in their backgrounds. Any positive encounters with state, federal and local law enforcement, border agencies, military authorities etc. would render an applicant inadmissible to the SENTRI program” (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2007).

Setting the financial aspects apart, the requirements to enroll in the SENTRI program may not seem outrageous to comply for many law-abiding users. For this reason, during the first years of existence of this program, I was often intrigued in my interactions with *Tijuanenses*, because many chose not to enroll, as they considered it invasive and even offensive. “It is like selling your soul to the devil”, someone once told me, “you cross fast but in exchange you give them your privacy and the ability to control your whole life”. But as someone born and raised in central Mexico, who arrived to San Diego via Boston, I still did not get it: Why were they concerned about being monitored if they really did not have “anything to hide”? It took me a year of

residence in Tijuana, to fully grasp what they meant. It was not only criminal activity that authorities aimed to prevent by enrolling only certain people in the program. It also had to do with issues of purity of citizenship⁴ (See Latour, 1993, p.11) a requirement that, as I explained earlier, many *tijuanenses* found extremely hard to fulfill.

I have discussed how, even if not in open or explicit violation of the law, many Tijuana residents implicitly infringe or bypass some regulations, either because of legal loopholes that enable them to take advantage of a binational condition that is considered to challenge the state, or stretching the opportunities offered by being members of more than one national community. In other words, hybrids do not fit easily in the standard categories (Starr and Bowker, 1999, pp 300-305) of citizenship established by the SENTRI program for a person to be eligible to enroll. Just as an example, applicants must submit evidence of legal employment or financial support in the country where they reside, including tax return receipts. U.S.-born Tijuana residents who choose to live in Tijuana may need to pay taxes in the United States, and many avoid this due to the tremendous cost it may entail, and because they may end up caught up in a legal crack having to pay taxes in both countries. Some own a business in Tijuana, the revenues of which they are expected to declare to the Internal Revenue Service in the United States. If they do not comply, they and their underage children are found ineligible to enroll in the SENTRI. I have also mentioned the

⁴ Bruno Latour understands the notion of purification as the compartmentalization of different ontological zones: nature and culture. In his view, this distinction leads to the production of separated fields of knowledge (Latour, 1993, p.11). Drawing from Latour, I understand purity of citizenship as the spatial separation that conditions the exercise of citizenship to one exclusive political community, both in terms of participation of a social contract and belonging to an imagined community.

situation of green card holders who are required to reside in the United States under penalty of losing their residence. If they choose to live in Tijuana they are ineligible to obtain a SENTRI card. For this reason, many commuters who work legally in San Diego wait in the regular lines for periods of two and more hours every day.

In their book entitled *Splintering Urbanism*, Graham and Marvin discuss that “the construction of spaces of mobility for some always involves the construction of bans for others” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.11). In this case, and very much in tune with the classification mechanisms that I have described before, the SENTRI program represents the privilege of those that fit in the legal taxonomy the U.S. government has established to regulate mobility at the border. Contrary to what I initially thought, the traditional borderlander, the hybrid or marginal that blurs the binary lines that actually divide the United States and Mexico, may indeed have “something to hide”, because of a way of life that challenges the state’s territorial control. Therefore, they often find themselves excluded from this form of mobility.

The SENTRI program clearly depicts the new highly polarized urban landscapes that are emerging globally, where “premium infrastructure networks –high speed telecomm, ‘smart’ highways, global airline networks- selectively connect together the most favored users and places, both within and between cities” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.15). This program is part of a process where infrastructure networks unevenly bind spaces together across cities, regions, nations and international boundaries, helping to define the material and social dynamics and divisions within and between urban spaces (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.11). As Castells suggests, “these processes are directly supporting the emergence of an

internationally integrated and increasingly urbanized and yet fragmented network society that straddles the planet (Castells, quoted in Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.14).

Having the SENTRI represents many advantages for those who, without being truly binational in the eyes of the state, choose to live a binational life, and take advantage of what many people in Tijuana call “the better of the two worlds”. Some authors refer to this group as a “global elite”. Bauman, for example, argues that in today’s global world “Some of us are fully and truly ‘global’, and some are fixed in their locality” (Bauman, 1998, p.2). Furthermore, given the current state of affairs at the border, having a SENTRI card is the only way in which borderlanders can actually reproduce to a limited extent the sense of immediacy and spontaneity they used to experience when going to San Diego. Only through the SENTRI can people actually maintain the same notions of time and space as in previous years, when they crossed the border just to pour gas, buy ham or do laundry. In other words, SENTRI offers the borderlander the possibility to materialize a binational or hybrid way of life, that in the past was substantiated by the constant coming and going across the border, but these days is being subject to closer restrictions that *de facto* curtail such hybridity.

The scenario produced by the SENTRI lane is not exclusive to the U.S.-Mexico border. Bauman, for instance, talks about the fact that “an integral part of the globalizing processes is progressive spatial segregation, separation and exclusion.” This reflects and articulates the experience of people, with “the ‘hybridization’ of the top culture –the culture at the globalized top”, and the “localized rest” (Bauman, 1998, p.3). Bauman clarifies the difference between these elites and the rest when he argues that “a particular cause of worry is the progressive breakdown in communication

between the increasingly global and extraterritorial elites and the ever more ‘localized’ rest” (Bauman, 1998, p.3). In the next chapter I will talk about how this dynamic translates into the everyday life of Tijuana residents, as some boundaries become more evident, both spatially and socially, in the practice of consumption. It is undeniable that the SENTRI program gives the wealthy and privileged access to a radically different urban experience the other residents of Tijuana have. As an acquaintance once told me in quite a convincing way: “With the SENTRI I don’t ‘suffer’ Tijuana. I live in Real del Mar⁵, I am at the border in fifteen minutes, I cross in five, and I live my life in San Diego”. In a scenario that strongly resembles Teresa Caldeira’s descriptions of gated communities in Sao Paolo, residents of Tijuana’s wealthy areas can by and large bypass Tijuana’s rampant poverty and growing insecurity, through this direct infrastructural connection with the first world (See Caldeira, 1996 and 2000).

However, contrary to what one would conclude at a first glance, social inequalities and income disparities are not the only relevant factors in this new form of spatial segregation, as surveillance technologies allow authorities to establish strict standards in the way borderlanders relate to the State, and define their membership to a national community. Ironically, economic deterritorialization in Tijuana has translated into a tighter grip that binds people to given national territories. As I have mentioned before, a person’s “legal” characteristics, determines how he or she moves,

⁵ Real del Mar is an upscale neighborhood constructed mostly to cater high income Mexicans that is located on the adjacent east side of the Ensenada toll way. Aside from stunning ocean views, residents of Real del Mar have access to a country club, a small shopping center, a private bilingual school, and a top of the line security system.

and if he or she indeed moves. Some can cross the border and work (citizens and green card holders) but may not be eligible to enroll in the SENTRI. Some others may only have the right to shop and visit family (not work) and depending on their labor situation and other elements, they may be eligible to SENTRI, provided that they can afford it and agree to subject themselves to a biographical investigation. And finally, some may not be allowed to move at all.

Since its implementation almost ten years ago, the program has adopted, throughout the years, a customer service approach, and now hires bilingual personnel that are for the most part courteous and attentive to users. After all, the pre-screening processes required to enroll, give inspectors some sort of security and trust so, in opposition to the regular lanes, crossers are more often perceived to be innocent until proven guilty than the other way around. Yet, even if regulations and procedures have relaxed over time, the cost for breaking the rules is high. People who are in the program are forbidden to cross with any object that does not belong to them. Regulations are strict. I met people who had the card confiscated because of transporting the suitcase of an elderly passenger who did the crossing by foot, or because they by mistake had an egg in the car that slipped from a bag of groceries bought in Encinitas on a weekend trip to Rosarito.

Children who use the SENTRI lanes every day to go to school have to be very aware of what they can put in their backpacks for lunch. During my days living in Tijuana, I saw groups of them leaving early, and couldn't help thinking of the many laws, regulations, trade agreements and protection acts those kids and their mothers must consider, when selecting what to have for lunch at recess. Because they often

cross the border in groups, so that the parents can share the stressful and long daily trip to school on “the other side”, what they bring for lunch becomes a source of tension and an issue of group survival, because a mistake made by one can have a high cost for all the passengers in the car. In the intricate social networks that form around “el turno” (the shift)⁶ parents only partner up with those who they know and trust. In these cases, having the SENTRI also plays a very important role in social relations, on who partners up with who to take the kids to school, which in a way ends up also having to do with who is friends with who.

In this context, the invisible parts of the system can also act upon people in inexplicable ways, as they can be dropped from the program at any moment, often times with no explanation. Upon crossing the border one random day, some are just informed their cards have been recalled and if they want to appeal they should write to an address in Washington. End of the discussion. For them, as well as for their neighbors and friends, this plays as a reminder that being or not being one of the roughly one hundred thousand border residents enrolled in this program is a life defining event. This is why the usual comment when someone first obtains a SENTRI card is: “You’ll see, your life is going to change!” People’s lives indeed change because the program determines the type of time-space relation a borderlander will be able to construct. Those who are not in the program but travel with SENTRI card holders are expected to get off the car, walk across, and be picked up on the U.S. side. Before September 11, this used to be a fairly easy process, but since then, pedestrian

⁶“ El turno” (the shift) is commonly known as a group of parents that take turns throughout the week to drive a group of children to a particular San Diego school.

lines have become significantly longer, and it can now take more than an hour for someone to cross the border by foot.

When crossing the border, it takes only one non-enrolled person to hinder the mobility of a whole group. I noticed this in a birthday party I organized for my son in San Diego, where a group of six friends from Tijuana arrived with their children remarkably late, almost when the celebration was over. They told me that one of them did not have the SENTRI, so the entire group decided to cross the border through the regular lanes. The enterprise took more than two hours, making them all very late. This reminded me of a young fellow who, used to cross the border with the SENTRI. He once went to San Diego with his girlfriend and her family, who are not enrolled in the program. In a subsequent group conversation, he mentioned how different it felt to spend hours in line to go to a place he usually reached much faster. Even if nobody made any comments about it, I asked myself if this fellow would think twice to travel with his girlfriend again. As an acquaintance once told me when she congratulated me for obtaining my SENTRI: “Now we can be friends, see? I often joke with my friends that we are only going to be friends with those with SENTRI”. And of course she was kidding, or perhaps not?

6. Conclusion

Almost twenty years after the publication of Ohmae’s *Borderless World* nobody questions that in fact, borders and states have not become less important with globalization. On the contrary, experiences like that of San Diego and Tijuana show that the border as an institution is still a solid expression of the formal sovereignty of

the State (Pratt and Brown, 2000, pp.49-51). Furthermore, the recent fortification of the U.S.-Mexico divide informs and reminds us about the relentlessness of State power which, as I have shown here, extends beyond the limits of the border itself. In this chapter I have discussed how, through the establishment of a selective border, the U.S. government has been able to accommodate its need to secure territorial control with that of facilitating a transnational economy.

In the case of the United States, state sovereignty and territorial power manifest themselves at the border in the physical control of space as well as the regulation of people's mobility. Here, I argued that territorial expressions of state authority materially rely on technologies ranging from top of the line biometric innovations, to a disciplinary regime that operates through the identification, classification, and surveillance of people. These technologies constitute what may be called a set of visible and invisible infrastructures that, along with the construction of physical barriers and the enactment of the legal machinery I have described in this chapter, give shape to the State's material and symbolic architecture of power at the border region.

These infrastructures have altered systems of cross-border access in Tijuana and San Diego. Similar to the case of Palestine, this involves a re-mapping of the space where borderlanders live and work (Fields, *Enclosure*, p. 3), also transforming their "spatialised memory" (Paasi, 1999, p.82) of the region where they live. Furthermore, the re-mapping of space at the border entails a reorganization of transnational connectivities, that like in other places of the world, sifts and sorts people in ways that (re) produce global stratification (Wonders, 2006, p.64). As a

result, Tijuana has become, more than ever, a space of people connecting, reconnecting and disconnecting both with the nation-state and what is commonly known as “the other side”. For this reason, the story I have told here opens the door to study different kinds of ‘bounded communities’, as well as patterns of exclusion and inclusion that are emerging worldwide. It is therefore a reminder that any theoretical move towards deterritorialization must account for the freeing of space for capital and communication, but not for identity and people (Ackleson, 2000, p.157).

In this chapter I have shown how the U.S.-Mexico border performs as a medium and instrument of social control, as well as a means to exert and communicate State power over local residents. The policies that I have described enforce old boundaries and create new ones. Assuming a connection between boundary construction and ontological identity narratives (Passi, 1999, p.57) I argue that, at the Tijuana-San Diego border, such boundaries are playing an important role in the redefinition of meanings and identities (Paasi, 1999, p.80). They are also changing the ways in which people relate to the other side of the border, Mexico as an infrastructural network and an imagined community, as well as their own community. This is why it is important to analyze how boundaries become a part of everyday life.

I have explained how State policies of territorial control are producing, through a series of material, legal, and discursive devices, patterns of exclusion and otherness at the U.S.-Mexico border, not only between north and south, but also within local communities. Along these lines I will explore, in the next chapter, how the wall that now separates Tijuana and San Diego is strengthening and rearranging boundaries among those who reside in the southern side. I will show how such boundaries, as well

as the differentiated patterns of national and transnational connectivity that sustain them, manifest themselves, materially and spatially, in the everyday practice of consumption.

CHAPTER 4. NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIVITIES: SPACES AND PRACTICES OF CONSUMPTION IN THE SAN DIEGO- TIJUANA BORDER

1. Introduction

This chapter reports on data gathered during two years of participant observation, in-depth interviews with Tijuana residents and field visits, with the objective of producing a geography of consumption in Tijuana. I will explain how the regime of exclusion that I described in Chapter 3 is embodied in differentiated spaces of consumption. I will discuss why and how these spaces are hubs that produce and express diverse relations between consumers and space, different modes of engagement with the State, and dissimilar ways of experiencing state power in everyday life. As social spaces, malls, supermarkets, small businesses, open air markets, transnational franchises and second hand stores, tend to influence the formation of social relations and subjectivities (Mansvelt, p.56). Here, we are talking about culturally dynamic places (Humphrey, 2008, p.173). Their meaning results from practices that in Tijuana are closely related to State policy. Therefore, I argue that spaces of consumption at the Mexican border become nodes of transnational state-society relations, where social distinction is increasingly tied to individual attributions of mobility. Spaces and practices of consumption are thereby virtual checkpoints (Migdal, 2004, p.6), as I will elaborate in more detail in the next chapter, which, added to the actual physical barriers that separate Tijuana and San Diego, mark and communicate internal boundaries among Tijuana residents.

As I explained in Chapter 1, Tijuana's consumer cultures distinguished themselves in that owning foreign goods did not necessarily signify social class or political affiliation, at least not in the same way as in southern and central Mexico. These differences were made evident for *Tijuanenses* who traveled south, as many felt different, and were treated like foreigners, because they *looked* different. However, the fact that NAFTA freed and widened the circulation of imported goods, which became more accessible and affordable, modified existing material cultures in Mexico, and reorganized systems of difference produced around the possession of items that in the past were restricted to elites, and people in the capacity to travel (See García Canclini, 1995).

Globalization has indeed altered these systems of difference, since more material goods are accessible for a wider range of people. Regarding this, some of the wealthy people I interviewed in Tijuana commented that nowadays, it is harder to distinguish who is who, since everybody dresses the same way. One of them once made a remark about her maids, and how they wear "exactly the same clothes" as her daughters. This is more accentuated in Tijuana, a market which, because of its geographical location, is directly connected to the global economy by a variety of supply mechanisms in which proximity to the United States plays a crucial role. Globalization is then, putting in perspective theories of difference constructed around the consumption of goods, like those along the lines of Pierre Bourdieu, who established a relation between the consumption of goods and processes of self-identification (See Bourdieu, 1990 and 1984). Here, I propose to substantiate this relationship by adding the component of space, and the relation to space, which in the

case of Tijuana is becoming crucial to understand how Tijuana residents organize and interpret social difference. Leaving aside issues of taste, the types of goods a person possesses may not be as strong signifier in Tijuana as the *place* where such goods were purchased. Therefore, I will explain in this chapter how Tijuana spaces of consumption connect people *differently* to material and symbolic networks of production, distribution and consumption that operate globally, nationally, and on local basis.

2. The Stage of Multilayered Intersections: Violence, Frivolity and Transgression in *La línea*

La línea, or the waiting line at the San Ysidro port of entry, is one of the most emblematic places of the U.S.-Mexico border. It is the busiest international gate in the world, with 56.6 million northbound crossings a year (Blanco, 2002). Almost all those crossings (96 percent) are made by Mexican nationals who reside in municipalities located right next to the border, and 95 percent of them are one day trips. A significant percent of such crossings (82 percent) are made by car, and in surveys conducted on several occasions it has been found that roughly 40 percent of such crossings are for shopping, 24 percent for work, 11 per cent for social visits (See Table 7). However, most of the media attention focuses on apprehensions of smugglers or unauthorized migrants.

La línea is the physical site where the third and the first world collide both geographically and visually, as made obvious by the *Marías*, *payasitos*, and *tragafuegos* (beggars of all ages and kinds) that spread out across a dusty landscape planted by high-tech deterrence and surveillance devices, gigantic screens that

advertise casinos and stores, and messages posted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Along with this, ultra equipped border agents (both canine and human) walk around vehicles and people projecting unlimited power. All this takes place in a unique blend of folklore and institutional violence, expressions of sovereignty and morning routines, extreme poverty and conspicuous consumption. The colorful and imperfect third world is here being smashed against the cold, imposing and flawless machinery that surrounds the most powerful country in the world.

Like a main *plaza*, la línea is the stage for *carritos* or vendors who sell cotton candy, sodas, balloons and souvenirs, from velvety Moctezuma statues to long-distance calling cards, and gourmet coffee conveniently served in people's cars, in addition to pastries, candy, cold beverages, and so on. The people waiting to cross the border are indeed a gigantic audience, a captive market to a wide array of services. For shoppers who did not have an opportunity to change currency, there are teams of tellers who will sell dollars with apparently no fee, the exchange rate painted on their fluorescent vests. For a small voluntary contribution, an innovative businessman will give his customers the last chance to dispose their trash, before crossing over to the United States. And, for twice or even three times the price, all sorts of reading materials are made available for drivers to help cope with the tedious wait, which is itself a popular subject of discussion in Tijuana's local media. In magazines and newspapers, it is not rare to find articles that provide practical "tips" about what to do while crossing the border, and how it doesn't have to be a source of stress: it can be a good opportunity to catch up with a good conversation with your husband, or friends.

If crossing with children, some suggestions include buying a DVD player for your child, or if you are crossing alone, use the opportunity to read the lyrics of a CD you like. So if you need to go to “the other side” and there is a long line, just sit down and relax.

Advertising is everywhere: from immigration lawyers to casinos and real estate brokers (letting customers know that they offer their services in Spanish), giant screens announcing furniture stores, cell phones and beepers with cross-border reach, hotels and restaurants lure their clients even before crossing the line. San Diego toy and department stores also display entire crews of sales people who distribute discount coupons to those waiting in line. Marketing strategies also capitalize on the border experience, sometimes even suggesting an explicit marriage between frivolity and violence, with a halo of erotic brutality. A good example of this was a billboard advertising an expensive clothing store outlet, with the image of a young male model naked from the waist up, and the words “Feel free to search us”. The ad was hanging right next to the actual facilities where detainees are held sometimes for days, without accountability¹. This particular billboard did not last long. A couple of weeks later it was replaced by another one, with the suggestive text “We just wanted to sneak this in” but with no image.

As I explained in Chapter 3, agents in the booths have the mission of facilitating legal crossings while deterring unauthorized substances and people. In the

¹ According to U.S. law, the border is considered an “inspection zone”. People entering the U.S. are expected to first go through the inspection zone before having access to the rest of the territory. In this zone, people can be detained and interrogated without a court order and certain rights related to personal integrity are subordinated to imperatives of national security and territorial sovereignty.

routine scrutinizing of bodies, there is an implicit distinction between who goes to shop (which is encouraged) and who goes to labor (which is not). The boundaries between the two are often blurry, sometimes because people who go to work also shop, or vice versa, since both activities are embedded with each other in everyday life as well as in the economy. It is then the job of U.S. authorities to make people understand certain individuals may be allowed to do only one thing but not the other, according to the classifications and attributions have been legally established. But people who have to make a living, or who have lived in the region for generations, refuse to submit themselves to such patterns of discipline. They figure out how to answer inquisitive questions; what to wear, what to carry in their purses. They have learned to deceive an impersonal bureaucracy, to discern what they can say and what they must hide about the purpose of a trip to “the other side”. Indeed, there is a general feeling among *Tijuanenses* that those rules are just a nuisance they must learn to sort out in order to get by. This reveals an everyday battle between the way individuals see themselves, and the categories imposed on them by a government that has made it a priority to exert territorial control over the region and its people, regardless of the side of the border where they live. This is the struggle between the wealthiest and most powerful State in the world and the dwellers of a city that happens to be right beside it. In it, the body becomes text, a map of meaning (Mansvelt, p.84); it becomes a skill to read its language, its looks, its place in a complex system of legalities, socialites and hierarchies, where there is often pretending and concealing, busting and catching, a constant hide and seek between identities, appearances, and facts.

But not everybody pretends in *la línea*. Just like a main *plaza*, it is Tijuana's ultimate public space, where people meet, flirt, and gossip in a combined setting of high tech and a *pueblito*. There has been for instance a way, after paying the price, to send a text message to a friend or a loved one through the screens, which is suddenly turned into a giant device of private communication for a massive audience to watch. "Bored at the border? Try text messages" says the ad. This ad denotes a trend in which crossing the border is becoming a whole experience in itself: "Juancho nos vemos en la gas de la H" was one of the messages I saw, in the hope I guess to hook up with someone momentarily lost in the huge ocean of cars, at the gas station, in H Street. "Nancy te amo", was another one, conveniently displayed for everyone to see, on San Valentine's day. In addition, *la línea* is also the favorite place for social movements to demonstrate against policies or measures taken by authorities on either side of the border, almost like the local version of a public sphere Viennese café. It is in fact undeniable that the line is one of the main topics of public conversation in the city, as waiting times or incidents that take place there inevitably make the front pages.

Of all places, it is in *la línea* where, after a year and a half of ethnographic research, I was able to get my first taste of the small town flavor that Tijuananenses now yearn for: Waiting in an atypically long pedestrian line at Otay Mesa, I engaged in a conversation with the women standing behind me. They were in a hurry because they had some kind of social event on "the other side". The line was particularly slow that day; it was obvious that there was something going on. At some point, my new friends lost their patience and asked me to save their spot while they looked for a ride with *alguien conocido* (someone they might know) in the car lanes, someone who

would hopefully be already close to the gate, and save them more time in line.

Incredulous, I agreed to save the spot, wondering if they would actually be able to find a familiar face in the endless lines of vehicles of the most populated port of entry in the world. To my amazement, it did not take them more than ten minutes. They quickly got in the back seat of a car, of someone who not only knew them but also trusted them enough to take them along as they went through the booths. In less than fifteen minutes they were on the other side. It took me an hour and half.

As a place of consumption and a gateway to stores, malls and swap meets on “the other side”, events in *la línea* are closely tied with the seasons of shopping. The day after Thanksgiving and Christmas are by far the most popular among local borderlanders. The shopping season starts on November 20, the anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, when people take advantage of the long weekend to start shopping for Christmas gifts. On average, sales increase by 20 percent during this time of the year. Every person who crosses the border to shop spends in average 168 dollars, which in 2005, amounted to 600 million dollars only in San Diego County, according to a story in a local newspaper, quoting interviews with officials from the San Diego Association of Governments (Martínez, 2006). On Thanksgiving, armies of shoppers spend the night in front of the stores waiting for the doors to open. In 2006, 50 out of 150 stores in the Las Americas Mall opened at midnight on Thanksgiving night, while sales increased by 50 and even 75 percent (Martínez, 2006). According to the San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, 85 percent of retail sales in that border neighborhood are made to shoppers crossing from Mexico (See Tables 8 and 9) In fact, the Thanksgiving sale is becoming a tradition in Tijuana. People drive even

from Rosarito and Ensenada; many of them wake up at 3 in the morning to make it in time for the bargains (See Table 10).

Since early December, it becomes more and more common to see border crossers carrying luggage, as they arrive in Tijuana from other parts of the country on their way to visit family on “the other side”. However, the dramatic boost in border waits usually occurs on the very last week, and particularly around the 23 of december, right after the *Aguinaldos*² (Christmas bonuses) are paid by most employers. During my three years of fieldwork (2004, 2005 and 2006) the increase was very similar, from approximately 150 cars per line to up to 400. People would stay in line for three and even four hours, trying to do their Christmas shopping in the small window of time between the *aguinaldo* payment and Christmas Eve.

Camino de la Plaza is a road on the U.S. side that connects I5 with the Las Americas Outlet Mall. During the shopping season, it becomes a gigantic bottleneck, almost the continuation of the line to cross the border. Going through the booths, where travelers are asked to show their documents, answer questions, and have their cars searched is just the first step. People then have to go through another line that lasts approximately one more hour, until they reach the shopping center and are able to find a parking spot. In total, some may have had to stay four, five and even six hours in the car, just to move a few miles. In interviews conducted by local newspapers, store owners and employees confirm the strong presence of Mexican consumers. In 2000, the International Chamber of Commerce of San Ysidro calculated that 75

² By law, every employer in Mexico is obliged to provide the employer with a full month or more of monthly salary in the Christmas season.

percent of the 60 thousand daily crossings registered in that port of entry during the month of December were of Mexicans going shopping.

I explained in Chapter 1 that the closeness of the border makes it easier for *Tijuanaenses* to share frames of reference with consumers of the United States. In December of 1999, *Pokemon* may or may not have been a huge sensation in southern Mexico, but in the stores that catered to Tijuana consumers, the character was everywhere: Dolls, stamps, and clothes were very popular. As a veterinarian visiting a San Diego shopping mall put it in an interview in a local newspaper: “I came to find my son’s *Pokemon*, since it is the first item in his letter to Santa. Here in San Diego there is a great variety of toy stores, so if I don’t find it here I will go to other stores or even shopping malls. *Pero eso sí, no me regreso sin los Pokemons de mi hijo* (but I will not go back without my son’s *Pokemon*”. To this quote, the reporter actually added:

It does not matter that the lines to cross from Tijuana to San Diego are eternal, nor the hours of wait to hear the already traditional questions by the customs agents at the San Ysidro and Otay ports of entry. Where are you going? What are you bringing? Are the useful inquiries that American agents make, one by one, to the thousands of Mexican shoppers that patronize San Diego’s commercial oasis” (Nidelstejer, 1999.)

Patience, is then, the collective mantra.

During the holiday season, stores situated at the border work extra hours, offering discounts of fifty and sixty percent. The movement is so high, that it even alters the exchange rate, due to the high demand for dollars. San Diego stores also become a meeting place for *Tijuanaenses* to catch up. After two years of residing in Tijuana, I was amazed by the number acquaintances I ran into in San Diego stores.

One day, during the holiday season, I found my Tijuana next door neighbor in a Kearny Mesa outdoor store. After exchanging hugs and New Year's greetings she told me: "well this is funny. I haven't seen you for months, I was wondering if you were in town, and now see where I find you!" We lived next to each other.

On December 26 and again on January 1st of 2005, I called the local hotline to inquire about the border wait. On both occasions there were 5 cars in line. On January first, my family and I crossed to go cycling in Coronado, lunch in a pizza place and returned to Tijuana within two hours. That was the first experience of immediacy I had crossing the border, a little taste of the way it was supposed to be before the waits started picking up the way they did. I also understood there why *Tijuanenses* so stubbornly carry out with their way of life, regardless of the waits, if they can be so variable. Some months are good, some months are bad, and even if there is often no apparent logic to it, shopping fluctuations certainly add a useful piece of information to understand the ups and downs of cross border traffic.

In early 2006, I crossed the border on several shopping trips, mostly during the month of January, commonly known as *la cuesta de Enero* (the post-holiday period when people recover financially from their shopping sprees). Right after *Día de Reyes*, on January 6th, the waiting times at the border severely declined. I then decided to try a night shopping trip, very common among *Tijuanenses* who work full time, and cross the border to do errands and shopping between 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. For this reason, many stores in the Chula Vista Area close no earlier than 11:00 or even midnight. With a colleague, I started the wait at 8:30 on January 9th. I wanted to do fieldwork on stores near I 805, Palm Avenue and other streets nearby. I was also going to take

advantage and do some shopping for myself. The wait was only 20 minutes (around 30 cars). As we approached the gate, we engaged in the following conversation with one of the agents:

Agent-Where are you folks coming from today?

M-Home

Agent-Where do you live?

M-Tijuana

A-Where are you going tonight?

M-Shopping

A-Where are you going shopping?

M-Walmart

Agent-Jesss....everybody is going to Walmart tonight! I guess there's everything in there isn't it?

And everyone is broke after the Holiday shopping, we commented among ourselves.

3. Shopping Distinction: The Monetary Weight of the Invisible Consumer

During the times when national markets were protected, smuggling American products into Mexico constituted the trade of the so called *fayuqueros*, who traveled to border towns in search of *fayuca*, or clothes, electronics, small appliances, watches, and so on, which they would then sell informally in the Mexican black market. Even nowadays, in the NAFTA era, the differences in price for certain products are often astonishing between Mexico and the United States. For instance, a television set or a DVD player in the Tijuana Walmart can cost three times as much as the same product in any Walmart store in San Diego. For this reason, San Diego shopping centers are not only full of *Tijuanenses*, but also people from the Mexican interior who come in shopping trips as often as their pockets and time allow them. Buying baby clothes, a shopper at the Fashion Valley Mall once told me she found exactly the same item she was about to get for 15 dollars, at 600 pesos (around 60 dollars), in *Liverpool*, a

prestigious department store in Mexico city. And, as one gets closer to the border on the U.S. side, it is even common to find stores like Ross and Walmart where they accept Mexican pesos.

Mexican shoppers contribute with significant resources to U.S. border economies. With low *per capita* incomes if compared to the rest of the United States, this explains why *per capita* retail sales at the border are higher than the national average (See Ghoddar and Brown, 2005, (See Table 11) Some scholars have attributed the high purchasing power of many Tijuana residents to the fact that homeownership in Tijuana is 68.3 percent (compared with 38 percent in San Diego). Many Tijuans own their home outright and don't have mortgages, which is why they have greater cash flow than the average consumer in the U.S (Ghoddar and Brown, 2005).

Only in California, cross-border consumers spend yearly between 1.6 and 3 billion a year (Ghoddar and Brown, 2005, p.49). In San Diego, a survey conducted by Crossborder Business Associates, a local market research company estimated that 7 to 8 percent of all retail sales in San Diego were made to Mexican nationals. One of every 12 dollars in San Diego is spent by Mexican shoppers (Crossborder Business, 2002). Annually, these percentages amount to 2 to 3 billion dollars spent by Tijuana customers in San Diego County (Blanco, 2004) but in good years, like 2006, the figure reached 6 billion dollars (Martínez, 2006). Retail stores in San Diego do not ignore the importance of their Tijuana Clients. In 2002, a market research firm interviewed business managers about this matter. They found that 35.6 percent of San Diego businesses considered Baja California customers to be highly important during the

winter holiday season of 2002 (See Table 10). So Mexican consumers are indeed important for the local economy.

Despite their importance, Mexican consumers in San Diego are somewhat invisible. Despite the efforts of local marketers to highlight their importance for the local economy, both media and authorities in the city tend to disregard the purchasing power of this group. Occasionally, local media will run a story about them, but in general, local news tend to emphasize illegal crossings (See Blanco, 2004 and San Diego Dialogue, 1994). This is attributed by scholars like Norma Iglesias to the enormous imbalance of power between these two cities³. The north in this case is not only in a position to dictate the terms of the relationship, but also which aspects of that relationship that will become visible in the public sphere.

This is perhaps why the identity, patterns and differences among Mexican shoppers in the San Diego area has been so severely understudied and also merged under generalizing categories. Indeed, to the people who go through the gates, *la línea* is also a place of transition. Crossers enter a new system of value (Hastings and Donnan, 1999, p.107) where they undergo a process of “reclassification” (Kearny 1998 in Wilson and Donnan, 1998). As they enter another world, they move from a classification system based on their region and social class, to another one which gravitates around ethnic and racial differences (Vila, 2004, p.45). The many differences among are then abruptly put on the backburner. Social, geographical or cultural distinctions by which they may operate will suddenly become less relevant:

³ I thank Norma Iglesias for making me note this in an informal conversation held in her office at SDSU.

rich and poor, *chilangos*⁴ or *cachanillas*⁵, they are all subject, for the duration of their stay, to a new label: they are now *Latinos*. They thereby become part of the Latino market (See Dávila, 2001) that just in San Diego and Tijuana combined is considered to be of around two and a half million people (Blanco, 2004).

According to Arlene Dávila, Hispanic consumers are one of the few marketing segments that is still considered a homogeneous group:

What is uniquely interesting about Hispanic marketing is its present status as one of the few unified marketing segments in relation to the so called U.S. general market and the pivotal role played by “culture” in its construction. In fact, the same trend that are fragmenting the so-called general market in the United States along the lines of lifestyles, gender or race –over and above the actual increase of Hispanic populations- are fueling the importance of Hispanics as a unified marketing segment(...). In contrast to “women” or “teenagers” who are simultaneously segmented according to lifestyles, age, tastes or race, “Hispanics” remain a protected segment by their mere definitions a homogeneously bounded, “culturally defined” niche. It is this definition, which makes all “Latinos” part of the same undifferentiated “market” –whether they live in El Barrio or in an upscale New York high-rise, or whether they watch Fraser or only Mexican novelas, or love Ricky Martin or consider him a sellout-that is foremost behind the apparently greater representation of “Hispanics” within the spheres of Corporate America (Davila, 2001, p.8).

At the border, the great diversity that, as Avila points out, has been ignored by corporate marketers; manifests itself primarily in the places of consumption they patronize. San Diego malls and shopping centers, for instance, tend to cater different clientele. In part, the difference is marked by car ownership and whether crossers

⁴ *Chilango* is the despective term by which people from all over Mexico call those who come from the capital. In the north, there is a tendency to use it to name any person who comes from the center and south of the country.

⁵ Originally, the term *Cachanilla* was used to name people from Mexicali, the capital of the state of Baja California. However, recently it is also commonly used to name those people born in the State, regardless of the city of origin.

travel by car or foot. In a survey conducted in 1995, it was found that on average, shoppers who drive across the border and have the possibility of visiting these places spend 170 dollars per trip (Ghaddar and Brown, 1995, p.6). In the border consumer mental map, UTC, Fashion Valley and Horton plaza tend to cater affluent consumers, as well as some coming from Mexico City and other southern cities on shopping vacations throughout the year, particularly during Easter. Towards the end of the season it is common to see these shoppers on their way home at the Tijuana airport, conspicuously displaying bags of prestigious brands and stores. Their trips usually do not last more than one week. They stay in hotels close to the shopping malls or in apartments and houses they own in places like La Jolla or Coronado. They devote their energy to visiting stores and theme parks.

During the years I have lived in San Diego, I have heard numerous comments about them, particularly by intrigued San Diegans who have engrained in their minds the stereotypical image of “the Mexican” as short, dark skinned, and poor but then encounter affluent groups of people at stores and restaurants, asking themselves “who are these people that look like us, shop like crazy and speak Spanish?”...Fashion Valley seems to be the favorite place for this type of consumer, because its prestige has transcended borders and it is considered the fancy place when people share narratives about their trips. “Fashion” like they call it, is also the site for very expensive retail stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus. During recessions like the one we are currently experiencing, consumers coming from Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey and also Tijuana buffer the impact of the economic downturn on local businesses. “It seems that there are not economic crisis in those places”, a

vendor in a fancy watch store told me in the winter of 2008. She had just said good bye in a very broken Spanish to an extravagantly well dressed lady who apparently left a very generous sum of money for famous brands.

Middle and upper class *Tijuanenses* show a special preference for malls that are closer to the border, like the *Las Americas* Mall and the Otay Ranch Mall⁶, both accessible from highways that connect Tijuana with the San Diego road system. While *Las Americas* is accessible from the last USA exit on the Interstate 5, Otay Ranch can be reached from the South Bay Expressway, a segment of route 125. The Expressway deserves a special mention. Inaugurated in November of 2007, it is the first toll road in San Diego County, instrumental for the success of Otay Ranch. It was built with the hopes of bringing more shoppers to the Chula Vista area, “carving in a new frontier for commuters willing to pay a price” (Schmidt, 2007).

Those who cross the border by foot usually roam San Ysidro’s small businesses and tend to have more reduced incomes. They may not own a vehicle in optimum condition or properly insured to venture in the southern California highway system. On average, they spend 39 dollars per visit. Just like the more affluent shoppers, their importance for retail businesses is remarkable. Only in San Ysidro, an estimate of 69 percent of total retail sales were made to Tijuana customers, while in Otay and National City the percentages are of 33 and 28 percent respectively (See Table 7 and Map 1). Their impact in the local economy is significant, effective in

⁶ Otay Ranch Mall was built in 2005 catering to high end consumers from both sides of the border. Although there are no surveys that document the origin of its shoppers, roughly 25 percent of them come from Tijuana. The mall has an area of 656,000 square-foot open air fashion, shopping and entertainment, and has around 150 stores. People shopping in this mall have an average annual income of 75 thousand dollars although the data says it does not include Mexican residents.

buffering the downs in American economy. According to Jason M/V Welsh, president of the San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, by November of 2008, the economic recession had decreased sales by 20 percent. Yet, the negative impact was not as prominent as in other areas that did not depend as much on Mexican customers.

I once asked Tomás, a young intern at the research center where I worked, if he planned to go to San Diego. I wanted him to return a book at UCSD. He replied that he had never “driven” on the other side. It would make him nervous to do so. All he does is occasionally cross the border by foot and take public transportation to a nearby videogame store. He did not have U.S. insurance, and though he made himself understood in English, he felt intimidated by U.S. traffic rules, so he limited his visits as much as he could to short trips just to buy cheap videogames and electronics. He made me realize that aside from the *physical* mobility that involves having the paperwork to move across the border, and the possibility to own a car, there is also a *cultural* mobility: Speaking English and being familiar with driving on the freeway. Often, people do not cross because their car may have some kind of irregularity, a light that does not work, or perhaps the baby seat is broken. They may be able to get away with this in Tijuana, but be in serious trouble if they are stopped by the San Diego highway patrol. For many, the “other side” is associated with incomprehensible obstacles and complications, aside from the huge fence, and the long lines. “Life is just built differently over there” Tomás said to me. From this point of view, the “other side” looks so alien, out of reach, for so many people. “The way those people speak, the way they get drunk when they come here. It is just as if they came from another planet” he said.

Mostly devoted to Mexican-Americans are Mission Valley and Plaza Bonita. These groups are often seen as “the other” by cross-border consumers, despite the fact they may have more than one thing in common. Regarding this map of consumption, it is worth remembering a conversation among middle class ladies some of whom had arrived from the south fairly recently. In the mandatory pilgrimage around San Diego shopping malls, one of the newcomers commented about the shocking sight of low-riders in Plaza Bonita’s parking lot. The owners of those vehicles indeed walked around the mall showing off their tattoos and piercings. “¡*Vámonos de aquí!* (Let’s just get out of here!) I told my husband”, she said. And they left immediately. Interestingly to me, she did not have to explain anything. Everybody in the room understood. “So where did you go?” I asked. And a third lady intervened: “This is why I like Las Americas, porque *Somos nosotros, pues*”, she said. You don’t need to go any further.

Mexican shoppers then, distinguish themselves from each other. Per capita purchasing power in Mexico remains comparatively low by world standards, however, 36 percent of the country’s wealth is in the hands of the top 10 percent of wage earners (Blanco, 2004). The people within this group who reside in Baja California constitute an attractive market for companies on both sides of the border. In 2002 it represented 29.3 of Tijuana’s earners (Crossborder Business Associates, 2004). But Mexican customers are not only valued for their purchasing power. They tend to pay cash and usually do not make returns. During my fieldwork, I interviewed some of Aida Galvez’s granddaughters (See Chapters 1 and 2). One them was living in San Diego working in the purses department of an expensive retail store at one of the fanciest

shopping malls in the area. Marcela was born in San Diego but did most of her early schooling in Tijuana. She attended college at an expensive private university in San Diego, and was now starting a career in retail. “We love Mexican customers both from Tijuana and Mexico city”, she said. Why?

Marcela: because they buy and do not make returns, which is really cool since my wage is based on what I sell minus returns. I love them, Mexican customers are very faithful and loyal if you give them a good service. You speak to them in Spanish; that makes them very happy. At work there are only another guy and I who speak Spanish. I have a client that tells me, I like such brand, please call me when you have something and she then recommends me to her friends. She goes out of her way so that I get the commission, while Americans couldn't care less.

MM: So you sell purses?

Marcela: Now. But I have been in several departments, and I see that Americans only buy out of need. If they need a purse, they buy it, but they do not pay so much attention to style, like Mexicans. They really go for the brand. They like Coach, or Gucci or the latest novelty. If their friend has it they want it, as opposed to Americans who buy something, they don't like it and bring it back. A Mexican who lives in Mexico City will not return it because they know exactly what they want, they already researched online and come straight to get it. And even if it breaks, they do not return it.

There is one more reason why border city shops love Mexican customers. They almost never redeem their taxes. By law, retail stores are mandated to reimburse foreign clients the sale tax on their purchase. Usually, this procedure is done in the Customer Service Department of large department stores. Shoppers need to show a passport and sign a statement that they will pay the tax in their own country. However, very few visitors are aware of this and rarely do it.

4. Shopping Malls and Shopping at the Border: Plaza Mundo Divertido and the Las Americas Mall

In Tijuana and San Diego's landscape of consumption, two main shopping malls are worth comparing. They both have constituted themselves as Mecca of the local middle class, although they represent and embody radically different consumption experiences. Las Americas Outlet was founded in 2001 and expanded in 2005. It extends over a surface of 561, 200 square feet located on the last USA exit, right on the east side of the San Ysidro Border, next to the gigantic fence that divides Mexico and the United States. Its unique location offers visitors plenty of views that combine the shiny and festive signs of stores like The Gap, Calvin Klein and Kenneth Cole with the oxide, barbed wire, and reflectors of the border wall. The border is so present, that is not strange to see border patrol agents driving around the parking lot or walking around the hallways. It is never clear if they are actually on duty, interviewing employees, or perhaps just shopping during lunch time. However, the mere fact that they walk around the mall in their uniforms, entering shoe stores and ordering frappuchinos does invest Las Americas with a spirit of transgression.

Indeed, Las Americas represents the commoditization of the border experience and also adds a "local" touch to the global dimension embodied in crossing the border. At the same time, it projects the image of what is considered "Latino" in the United States. Perhaps this is why it is named after Puerto Rico's legendary shopping center, which performs as an ambassador of American consumer culture in the island, and the ultimate spatial expression of the American way of life. Las Americas Outlet Mall was indeed conceived to cater to a *Latino* clientele. The architectural style emulates the

Spanish accents of Balboa Park, which, digested and adapted by American aesthetics and construction methods, is considered to be the root of “*lo hispano*” or a consolidated version that encompasses anyone from a Spanish/Latin American background (Dávila, p.1, 2001). The complex is organized in a series of plazas connected by halls, decorated by mosaics and fountains that are named after places in Spain (Plaza Catalonia and Las Ramblas) Mexico (Plaza Durango and Puerta Vallarta⁷), Tijuana (Patio Agua Caliente) and regular names in Spanish (Plaza de las Fuentes or Paseo de la Moda). The furniture in the food court also emulates a hybrid version of Mexican and Spanish styles, making it appear like a gigantic corporate *fondita* (a small restaurant), where families gather to eat. Even if there is not a coffee shop or any other establishment that invites customers to linger, just fast food that prompts people to eat quickly and continue their shopping, it is common to see patrons having coffee and chatting.

In addition to the spatial organization, built environments and architectural style, both consumers and employees personify the “border” flavor of Las Americas. Many of the malls’ patrons come from Tijuana. Also, a significant number of store employees and supervisors cross the border every day, sometimes spending two and even three hours waiting in line to cross the border on their way to work. It is common that these employees do not bother to find out if a customer speaks English before offering help in Spanish. It is also not uncommon to hear, in many stores, Tijuana radio stations as background music. In the two and a half years I lived in Tijuana, I never ran into someone in the street, but I found neighbors in Las Americas on more

⁷ An anglicized version of Mexico’s popular resort Puerto Vallarta.

than one occasion. In their minds and languages the mall was an appendix of Tijuana, inserted in U.S. territory.

Along with an additional shopping center across the street, the Las Americas commercial area is perhaps the most diverse and best supplied of San Diego County. It has 125 stores of almost any possible brand imaginable: Stores like Levi's, the GAP, and Nike have large depots where Tijuana shoppers sort among clearance racks items for a significantly low price. They buy clothes for themselves, and for others as well. Indeed shopping for others is quite common among *Tijuanenses*. They buy for relatives or friends who cannot momentarily or permanently cross the border, and depend on someone to bring them clothes, electronics or other supplies. They buy for neighbors or coworkers who might prefer to save themselves the long waits at the border, and return the favor at some other time. And, they also buy to resell, among neighbors, friends and acquaintances, to make extra pocket money. The figure of the *vendedor* is similar to what Zilberg found in El Salvador with *viajeras*, women who travel back and forth Los Angeles and Salvadoran towns carrying gifts for family members. Although the length of these trips are shorter than those of the *viajeras*, and their activities do not involve a two-way connection between family members, these people act as mediators between two markets, establishing a communication network (Zilberg, 2002, p.209).

In the line to pay for clothes I buy for my son, I frequently engage in speculation with people standing next to me about sizes and whether they fit a particular nephew or niece. A sweater may be size 5 but so and so is a big kid, better take a 6 or a 7. They may also find a child the same age in the store and ask the mother

if she can try on the garment, just to be sure. When I ask if their relatives can return the clothes in case they do not fit, they often give me a vague look, they say “yes of course” and change the subject while I get an awkward feeling of having said something inappropriate. People shopping for others are easily recognizable because they usually take exaggerated amounts of items, usually clothes of a diverse range of sizes and styles. Indeed, a high proportion of regular weekday clientele is composed of people who buy items that will then be resold in their homes to neighbors and friends or to swapmeets and *mercados sobreruedas*. One can also see them walking back, since the Mall is very close to the border, carrying large bags with logos like Old Navy, Puma, and The Gap.

While people from Tijuana can find in the stores of *Las Americas* mall brands and products that are unavailable at home, it is also remarkable that some local Tijuana initiatives have made their way to the mall’s hallways, along with the cell phone and novelty carts that are placed in the open areas. One of them is NACO, a line of products founded by a collective of designers and artists from Tijuana. The term Naco, as is said in the website, “is originally a derogative term used by upper and middle class Mexicans to describe things and people they feel are way beneath them in terms of hip-ness, taste and economic status. It’s usually employed as a synonym for ‘poor & ignorant’, but Naco-ness knows no economic or educational boundaries” (Naco Website, 2009). The collection includes t-shirts, hats, backpacks, and other apparel and accessories with images that make reference to the border experience, with the implicit idea of challenging, precisely, traditional values of classiness, the hip and status.

Aside from the stand in *Las Americas*, NACO has a store in Tijuana, which is located at *Plaza Mundo Divertido*, Tijuana's equivalent of Las Americas Plaza, which has attempted to attract the city's middle class. The mall borrows its name from *Mundo Divertido*, one of the few indoor amusement parks in the city, an enormous depot located on the mall's edge, populated by a high variety of videogames, trains, carrousel and trampolines. Locally, *Mundo Divertido* plays the role of Disneyland or Legoland, at a much more affordable price and on the same side of the border. In a city with few public spaces for leisure, this "recreation" hub offers "something to do" in Tijuana. It is somewhere to take the kids on a Sunday afternoon without having to engage in the long and strenuous car ride across the border, without having to update the U.S. insurance, set up a proper car seat, fix a broken light in the car, and of course free of the previous screening of a stable job, a high income and a clean record that has become indispensable to go across.

Plaza Mundo Divertido is located in Tijuana's *Vía Rápida* (See Map 4), enclaved in an industrial area and very much the American way, surrounded by huge a parking lot. The area has, in recent years, gradually developed into a consumption hub for large American stores, like Costco and Home Depot. It is located in an area of the city that is accessible for the old neighborhoods that are adjacent or very close to the border, but also close to the new developments in the south-east side of town, that have undergone a construction boom in recent years (See Map 4). Unlike the shopping Center in *Plaza Rio* that is accessible by public transportation, this mall's main means of access is by car, which by default becomes a social marker, as *Mundo Divertido* is mostly patronized by people who own a vehicle.

In theory, *Plaza Mundo Divertido* is supposed to cater to both Tijuana and San Diego families. As it states in its website, it has the goal of “offering San Diegan and Tijuanan families a concept of leisure and fun, security and cleanness” (Mundo Divertido Website, 2009). Although significantly smaller than *Las Americas* (it has only 85 stores), it displays the same spatial arrangement, with a large passage surrounded by small establishments, plus a movie theater (which is missing in *Las Americas*) and a couple of fountains. However, instead of the vast array of stores, products and brands displayed in *Las Americas*, the shopping options at *Mundo Divertido* are very limited, and the prices significantly high. There are some miscellaneous stores that display a few random designer clothes like Armani and Versace from previous seasons on their windows, a couple of sports stores that sell mostly clothes and shoes, a Sex shop, a *Mix Up* store with Latin American and American CDs, and a few establishments with Hello Kitty products along with gifts, crafts and stuffed animals.

The small businesses of *Mundo Divertido* are supplied with products brought legally from the “other side”, which after covering the import and other tariffs are offered to consumers at a significantly high price. These stores are usually undersupplied, the range of sizes for a particular garment is often incomplete, and it is mostly a stroke of luck to find something that fits. Some of these businesses offer a slightly larger selection of cheap “Made in China” clothes that are bought for nothing in the warehouses of Los Angeles and Otay Mesa. Usually the quality of these products is poor and there are no return policies. Once an item is bought the money is lost, even if it tears apart after the first wash. One may ask how these establishments

actually survive. In certain sectors, these stores are able to pose a modest competition to San Diego shopping centers, primarily because there is an increasing number of consumers who are denied visas to go across the border, as well as masses of people arriving to Tijuana from central and southern Mexico that do not share the habit of shopping “on the other side”. We should not disregard either, the long waits at the border.

By and large, *Mundo Divertido* offers more opportunities to hang out than to shop. It performs a similar role to that of the public plazas in the south and center of Mexico, where families go on the weekends to kill some time and teen agers circulate in cliques, displaying their brand shoes, clothes, watches and cell phones. Indeed, people go to *Plaza Mundo Divertido* mostly to socialize, eat and walk around. There are plenty of inexpensive family restaurants, some of them franchises of local and national chains, two coffee shops, including a *De Volada*, the local version of Starbucks, a few optometry clinics, an *Aeromexico* office and cell phone stores.

Despite being undersupplied by U.S. standards, *Mundo Divertido* is also a hub that links, at a smaller scale, Tijuana markets with production and distribution networks from Mexico. Aside from NACO products, gift stores sell lines of products like *Fulanitos* or *Distroller* that, along the lines of NACO, include design products like stickers, cards, notebooks, pillows and gadgets that reflect local idiosyncrasies⁸. The three brands are actually in expansion; *Distroller* recently opened a branch in

⁸ *Distroller* has more expensive products that mostly cater urban middle classes that are ready to mock the Catholic tradition and Americanization in their life. Stickers with the image of the Virgen of Guadalupe to place in the card, with a prayer that will keep it safe from burglars. *Fulanitos* is more affordable, mostly selling office supplies like pens, pencil sharpeners, and dolls.

Venezuela and another one in Miami, while *Fulanitos* has an efficient method to order online from the United States. These products are known and consumed among those people who share the same frame of reference or are exposed to it from the south. The products become fashionable locally, and symbolically constitute a virtual checkpoint. *NACO* and *Distroller*, constitute *Chilango* taste that has permeated the local notion of “cool”.

Aside from gifts and items, it is also worth noting the presence of some Mexican brands. One of them is *Flexi* a national shoe manufacturer from Guanajuato that constitutes a model in shoe production. Yearly, the brand sells nine and a half million pairs of shoes; it constitutes a business model of success because of its good quality and prices that are comparable to those in the United States. In Tijuana one can spot a *Flexi* store in every shopping mall that opens, as the legendary old import stores (like Sara or Swed Imports See Chapter 1) close one by one. Because of the cost of imported merchandise, one could say that the establishments that sell these products are at a competitive advantage, which also explains why the businesses that sell designer imported clothes tend to appear and disappear more easily, while gift shops and shoe stores have more possibilities of success. They are places that bring pieces of Mexico to the market, small scale southern-Mexican embassies of consumption, patronized and established by people who are familiar with their products, products that by the way are available and close.

5. Mediated Globalization, Transnational Stores and National Supermarkets

On November 29, 2004, Jaime Valdovino, President of the Tijuana chapter of the National Chamber of Commerce (CANACO) publicly admitted that due to the high rates in import taxes, local Tijuana merchants have a hard time in retaining the 3 billion dollars that *Tijuanenses* leave in San Diego every year. He explained that U.S. businesses are able to offer products manufactured in China at a much more competitive price (Informativo, 2004). However, in addition to the price-quality relation and the fact that the U.S. market can offer much more to consumers than Mexico's, the insistence of buying in San Diego has, as I have discussed in previous chapters, historical roots: It is part of a way of life of which market competitiveness is a an undeniable part, but in which *habitus* and relation to space is another.

In fact, during the years I lived in Tijuana, I noticed in many people an internal stubbornness, a reluctance to change their way of life even if it now means sitting hours in line just to pour gas or buy milk, dealing with intrusive "foreign" authorities. In Tijuana, many people engage in a daily unspoken battle with two States that are placing an increasing number of barriers for them to access places that were historically part of their everyday life. As Aida Gálvez had mentioned to me (see first chapter), those places were a part of their home. These unspoken battles make them subject to increasing surveillance by a foreign government. Numerous barriers to cross-border movement translate into wasted time, gas and the possibility of being subject to physical or verbal abuse by U.S. agents. I often asked myself why many people persist crossing the border and inquired about this to the journalists and marketers I interviewed. In a conversation I had with Mr. Cervantes-Pérez, who as I

mentioned in Chapter 2, is a journalist and academic and who has lived in the city for over three decades, he observed that people cross the border less frequently because of franchises that have established in Tijuana, like Costco, Walmart, Sams, and also supermarkets like Gigante and Comercial Mexicana.

In fact, as the border stiffens and mobility between Tijuana and San Diego becomes crippled, a new “captive” market has emerged for both national and transnational business. This is why, despite perceptions that products acquired north of the border are of better quality and price, stores like Costco, Walmart, Home Depot, and Sam’s Club have managed to find niches in Tijuana. Recently, even a Starbucks was installed in *Zona Río*, as well as fast food chains like Mc Donalds, Jack in the Box and Applebee’s. At the same time, Many Mexican supermarket chains, like *Comercial Mexicana*, *Ley*, and *Gigante*, have opened more stores in the city to compete with the local businesses, as well as others like *Sanborns* (restaurants), *La Parisina* (fabric store), *Flexi* (shoe stores), and so on. In fact, one of the most recent pieces of news is that *Liverpool*, an upper end retail store from Mexico City, opened a store in the Tijuana’s *Zona Río*. Unlike those in the rest of the country, this establishment is restricted to perfumes and cosmetics, which are traditionally favored by import laws making their prices very competitive, but does not offer clothes or other items that are cheaper in San Diego.

Despite the fact that many of the products Tijuana residents now find in the city may come from the same origin as those they buy on “the other side”, I argue that in fact, Tijuana consumers who for whatever reason end up patronizing shopping spaces on the southern side of the border are engaged in a different product-consumer

relation that is mediated by the Mexican State via tariffs, import taxes and a whole distribution network that materially connects shoppers with Mexico's market. At the same time, shopping in Tijuana immerses them in a system of narratives and frames of reference shared in Mexico, and in this sense, they relate to Mexico as an imaginary community. When people buy in the United States, they are subject to other kinds of mediation, that respond to that country's own foreign trade regime as well as the obstacles people have to go through to access stores and shopping centers. However, at the border, the transition feels for many consumers like moving from a *direct* product-consumer relation to a *mediated* one, because of the alterations in the quality/price relation, as well as the more open, diverse and free configuration of the U.S. market.

5.1 Shopping for a Washing Machine: The Two Sides of COSTCO

When I moved to Tijuana in 2004, I started shopping for a washing machine. A neighbor told me that I would find the best deal at Costco, on the "other side". She explained that in order to pass the machines without paying import taxes, I would have to bring 5 people in the car, since each person has the right to carry merchandise worth 250 dollars. In fact, the price for a washer and dryer at Costco even beats the cost of a second hand machine in good condition at a "Segunda", a second hand store. What my friend did not know is that in fact I found the same deal, with the same machines at the same price, Costco, in Tijuana. Even better, instructions were in Spanish and the measurements in liters. Instead of maneuvering across the border with laws and tariffs, I simply had it delivered to my home. So what does this mean in terms of

connectivity? This is a clear example of how different spaces of consumption differently produce connectivity. While Costco Tijuana connected me to a frame of reference in litters, with instructions in Spanish, Costco San Diego would have done it to a whole different world. Both washing machines were similar products. However, they belonged to different networks (production and distribution) and they also communicated different things on both sides of the border.

This has been, in fact, the experience of many *Tijuanenses* during the past years. The same story is heard over and over again, about products that are now available on “this” side, and therefore it is not necessary to cross. In this case, it was not someone buying large amounts of something on the other side and then re-selling it among friends and neighbors, but an established transnational corporation with branches all over the world that performs, essentially, the same role. Costco Tijuana opened its first store in 1994, in the same area of the city that also hosts a Home Depot, an Office Depot and *Plaza Mundo Divertido* (See Map 4). Four years ago, they opened a second store in *Zona Río*, which is very close to the border.

Interestingly, people residing in the United States constitute an important proportion of COSCO Tijuana’s clientele (15 percent in the *Vía Rápida* Branch and 30 percent in the *Zona Río*). Many find certain products like liquor or cigarettes more affordable on the southern side of the border. The store also attracts U.S. customers because some of the electronics can be more affordable as well as the availability of credit, in particular a popular credit card that grants the full year with no interest. Another group that patronizes Costco Tijuana is composed of the small business

owners, or what is commonly called *changarreros*⁹. Food stands, restaurants or café owners. This clientele is often torn between purchasing products for their businesses in San Diego and bringing them in their trunks without paying import taxes (what is commonly known as *cuajelazo*) and buying wholesale at Costco. They make their choices depending on price, cost of gas, times at the line and of course, whether they dispose of entry documents.

There are also Tijuana residents who used to do their shopping on the other side, but with the waits at the border and the price of gas increasingly decide to stay. These people mention that in the Tijuana Costco, makes it is easier to buy exclusively the product they meant to purchase, since the store is not next to any others. In Costco San Diego, where the facilities are surrounded by Walmart, or other shopping venues, consumers end up buying (and spending) more. Finally, another group of people is of course formed by those who do not have a visa, a number that is growing even among the store's employees, who despite having stable employment with the company and owning property in Tijuana, are denied renewal of the document because of their small income. Despite the fact that the store in *Via Rápida* cannot be easily reached with public transportation, a number of its patrons are low income people who arrive by bus. This marks a stark contrast with the stores in other parts of Mexico, particularly in the country's interior, where shopping at Costco is a sign of status. Stores in south-central Mexico are located in well off areas and are mostly patronized by high income

⁹ *Changarro* is the colloquial name of a small business. So people who own a *changarro* become *changarreros*.

clients. In Tijuana, this segment of shoppers mostly patronizes businesses in San Diego, although it is becoming more common to see them in local stores as well.

Despite being located closer to San Diego than to Mexico City, Costco Tijuana depends on the Mexican corporate center for operations. All the items in the store, imported, national or local, have been sanctioned by import laws, national standards of quality, and all the corresponding taxes. This legal framework is set up nationally, by the Mexican government. It determines which products are made available for the consumers of Costco Tijuana. It also affects the trajectories of such products, meaning the places where they are produced, the routes through which they are distributed, the types of store where they end up and the kinds of consumers that purchase them. Therefore, while Costco Tijuana does sell some of the same products as the stores in the United States, or from the same sources (some of which they receive directly from San Diego) it also offers others that belong to a completely different distribution network, since they are produced in Mexico or other parts of Latin America. Global or not, such products arrive from the central operations in the Mexican interior or the local surroundings. Accordingly, it is really hard to find imported wine in Costco Tijuana, and most of the wine available is produced in the Guadalupe Valley, while plenty of cereals, clothes and cheese have the Kirkland label (Costco's brand) and are exactly the same products that they sell in San Diego. Not the milk, however, even if it is Kirkland, their local producer is *Leche Jersey*, which I have mentioned several times in previous chapters.

But what lies behind these arrangements? What are the implications of buying the same washing machine in Costco Tijuana as opposed to Costco San Diego? There

has been great controversy about this issue in Tijuana, the local chambers of commerce putting together entire campaigns designed to convince consumers that the products they buy on the southern side of the border are exactly the same (See Figure 2). During my stay in Tijuana, I had the opportunity to personally assess the effect of such campaigns in conversations with different groups of women. The shared perception always was that, despite what advertising said, products bought in the U.S. were of better quality and price. Regardless of whether this is true or not, the fact is that in the people's minds these campaigns were telling lies. Yet, the quality, or imagined price-quality relation of the products people buy are only one issue. The other issues have to do with the networks and connectivities that consumers access and establish when entering a particular store, and buying its products. Here, I will address this distinction in terms of the products, and in terms of the spaces where such products are bought.

Like in any other store, Costco Tijuana consumers buy, with their products, a particular trajectory. The path can change. For instance, Kirkland bottled water sold in Tijuana stores comes from Niagara, while the same brand in other Costco branches from the interior of Mexico may come from other sources. The packing will be the same as in other parts of the United States, although the label will be in Spanish. In order to cross the border, these bottles were subjected to a series of regulations, including import taxes and tariffs, some of them a product of trade negotiations between both countries, some of them domestic assertions of Mexico's economic territoriality. This framework is thus designed by the State, or the States, in this case. Such legislation also explains the fact that in the shelves of these stores it is so hard to

find certain products and not others. Wines, for example, are protected by Mexican law, so COSCO Tijuana only sells Mexican wines. At the same time, there are products that are impossible to find in San Diego, like *jocoque* and other Middle Eastern products Tijuana's Lebanese families produce and sell locally, or European children cartoons that are popular in Mexico, but unknown in the United States.

At the moment a customer grabs a product from the shelf and puts it in a shopping cart, he or she is establishing a connection with the distribution networks that made it possible for the item to reach the store, as well as the regulations and tariffs that guided its trajectory. Therefore, the shopper in question will establish a pattern of connectivity that is radically different to that of someone lifting the same product of a shelf at the other side of the border. Those who buy a product on the southern side of the border will not establish the same material connection with the product as those who buy it on the northern side. The power of the State will manifest itself differently on each side, as it will mediate differently between the product and the consumer. This impacts the price, the packing and the availability. Therefore, regardless whether the product comes from the United States, China, or any other country, the connection with the consumer is mediated differently by the State on each side, which positions consumers in distinct production-consumption networks.

Along these lines, even if the washing machine I bought in Costco Tijuana is the same as the one my neighbor bought in San Diego, I as a consumer, was subject to the mediation of the Mexican State, its laws, regulations and legislations and other manifestations of territoriality (see Chapter 2), which determined the trajectory of these products in a different way than occurred with my friend. Many border residents

have historically had the possibility of negotiating between both frameworks, changing back and forth at their immediate convenience, which, as I explained in the first chapter, played an important role in shaping people's relation to the spaces where they lived and shopped, the nation as an imaginary community and ultimately, their identity. This happened because the access to spaces of consumption on both sides of the border was relatively easier than it is today.

But the different patterns of connectivity do not restrict themselves to the products themselves. They also refer to the space where the product is sold and purchased. In the same way that some of the stores of *Plaza Mundo Divertido* like Naco or *Flexi*, serve as nodes that connect consumers to material networks and frames of reference that operate locally and nationally, the Tijuana Costco stores also operate as nodes that connect consumers to the global market in a way that is subject to the mediation of the State and its priorities. In this context, one may ask what happens when for a variety of reasons that range from lack of entry documents, a vehicle, time or patience to wait in line, consumers end up presenting themselves at Costco Tijuana instead of Costco San Diego.

Thinking of it in terms of the theory that informs this dissertation, we can say that the choices of the consumer here, become very much conditioned by the territoriality of the states, or to be more precise, by the manifestations of such territoriality in terms of economic policy (in the case of Mexico) and physical control, whether visible or not (in the case of the United States). Furthermore, it is said that consumption is a space making activity (See Sack, 1988), because the act of consuming involves moving from the home to the store. Where people consume and

what spaces of consumption form part of everyday life are intricately related not only to people's connection to production and distribution networks, but also with the narratives and references that surround such networks. Since they reflect access to particular spaces, the narratives and references that people access create boundaries that distinguish some from others. They are also manifest in people's identities, expressed in the types of goods people possess and display, as well as in their relation to space and the identities that are nested in such space (See Chapter 1).

5.2 Shop Here, Shop There: Walmart Stores in the "Binational Metropolis"

Talking to my son's teacher about buying a fish, she said to me: "Whatever you do, do not buy it at Walmart, mine died within two days". What Walmart? I asked, thinking that there was not yet such a store in Tijuana. She replied: "The one *here* in Chulavista". Her comment brought my attention to the fact that the Walmart stores that are located close to the border, particularly the one in Chulavista's Border Crossings Shopping center, (See Map) is an institution among *Tijuanenses*. Two years later, talking to a local marketer about shopping patterns, he implicitly brought up the actual relevance the Walmart store has in the lives of Tijuana residents. He was talking about one of his employees who, after 10 years of stable employment, had finally obtained a visa. The woman was going to cross the border with her family for the first time that weekend. "Where do you think they will go? ... to Walmart. *Si no les da para más* (what else are *these* people going to do?" he said. Indeed, I located the person over the phone and she confirmed his guess....went to Walmart with the family on a

Sunday after mass, had a snack in one of the fast food restaurants around the Border Crossings Shopping Center, and went home.

By the time I had my conversation with the marketer, I had already made my way on several occasions to the Chulavista Walmart. I made my visits at different hours of the day, noticing different types of clientele. During the day it is most common to see housewives or people buying to resell. There is also a significant number of Latinos, who address each other in English or Spanglish. However, the store does not close until midnight for a reason. After 9 pm, the crowd starts changing, as the people who work in Tijuana during the day cross the border to do their shopping at night. So while during the day the number of vehicles with Mexican license plates in the parking lot is barely noticeable, between 9 and 11 pm almost half of the cars were from Baja California.

During my visits, I or my companions would always meet people we knew, usually shopping with the family. Walmart Chula Vista is both a tourist destination and another appendix of Tijuana. According to various reports, around eighty percent of their clients were from south of the border, and like in other stores in the area, they accept Mexican pesos. In fact, as in *Las Americas*, neither shoppers nor employees bother to find out if the person they address speaks Spanish. It is a given, and even when they page someone, they do it in Spanish: “*Laura Castañeda, su hija la espera a la salida*”, says the voice telling a mother her daughter is waiting at the store’s exit. I hear it while browsing in the toys section an abundant supply of kids’ books in Spanish. And in the adjacent store where I stopped by to buy diapers at the end of my visits, there was a huge sign that said “Baby Registry. Registro de bebés”. In this

particular store, there are mostly Latino and Mexican families shopping around. One time, around 10 pm, I counted 10 families with small children walking around the aisles. I asked them if they came from Tijuana. Almost everybody says yes, and some specified that was the only time they could shop, even if it was past the kids' bedtime, since they worked during the day.

Walmart, according to my neighbors, is a place where you go when you are really broke, since it is significantly cheaper. A package of batteries costs three times less in Walmart than in Tijuana stores. It is one of those places where Mexicans mix with Latinos. Upper segments try to avoid the stores that are close to the border. It is a matter of whom you mingle with, as someone told me when I just moved to Tijuana: "*hay muchos naquitos en las de Chulavista*" (many low class people in the Chula Vista stores). Class differences are also perceived by the vendors, as well as the difficulty to classify people sometimes. When I asked the cashier at the baby store if she had many customers from Mexico, replied to me "the other day, there was a woman with a lot of jewelry, '*muy muy*' (smug, presumptuous with a connotation of high class), and I thought she was from Tijuana....but she was from here. You never know these days". This young Latino woman implied with her comment that there is a shared image of Tijuans as high class people. Whether true or not, this image was shattered by a woman who looked like she was from Tijuana but indeed lived in the United States. Lately, these categories are being reorganized, as the Latino community in the U.S. becomes more complex, bodies are hard to classify, and compartmentalize in fixed ways. Making reference to what I argued in previous chapters about the government's effort to classify, identify and decipher each body that crosses the

border, the cashier's comment makes us ask to what extent the infrastructures placed by the U.S. government will ever serve their purpose, given the enormous complexity of border society. "It is hard to know who is who", she said to me. She was right, and in reference to the mechanisms that I described in Chapter 3, these trends make more important the use of data bases, biometrics and other technologies that make the classification of bodies more "objective" and less subject to the reading of bodies.

When I left the stores at around 11, it took me about 15 minutes to get home in Tijuana. I arrived at my small community and, when the guard opened the gate, I waved at him, the same way I had waved two hours earlier when I was heading off for my shopping. He was still there; in the same place. Only two hours of his shift had gone by. I wondered if he had ever been on "the other side". I always find it intriguing that at the same time that people in Tijuana do their shopping in San Diego, and in two hours they are home, there are others who end up losing their lives in their attempt of crossing the border. What marks the distinction between ones and others? How relevant is it? Is there really one?

The new Tijuana Walmart, the supercenter store, was opened in in 2006. It is located in a zone of recent development in Tijuana, with many middle class and lower middle class developments, and "apartamentos de interés social" (subsidized housing) (See Figure 4 and 5 and Map 4). The Walmart is enclaved in a new shopping center, The *Macro Plaza*, a shopping ensemble that includes a movie theater, a food court and some stores located around a courtyard setting with plazas and pathways. The Supercenter has an Applebee's restaurant, a C&A franchise and the rest are stores that very much resemble those of *Mundo Divertido*, boutiques with a few clothes,

optometry stores, cellphones etc. The food court has a combined flavor of an upscale Mexican market, with taco stands surrounding the tables, as well as a small pizzeria and a sushi place.

When it opened, the Walmart supercenter was expected to lure many cross-border consumers into staying in Tijuana. According to the operations director for *Walmart de Mexico*'s northern area, "some prices were expected to be higher than in the United States, but others lower, depending on such factors as import taxes" (Cearley, 2007, p.1) a similar situation to Costco's. A toaster, for instance, was ten dollars more expensive than in the U.S., but locally manufactured items like soap, tortillas, cleaning supplies, beans and hair gel were cheaper. Therefore, "93 percent of the store's products are made or grown in Mexico, with an emphasis on California industries" (Cearley, 2007). According to analysts interviewed by the San Diego Union Tribune, Tijuana's border-crossing middle-and upper-middle-class shoppers might still end up crossing into the United States, but the store provides choices for those who aren't willing to wait in line at the border or who don't have visas" (Cearley, 2007).

Since supermarket stores at the border have to compete with their San Diegan counterparts, the Walmart supercenter has an astonishing facility. Unlike the Walmart stores in Chulavista, it also has an ample selection of groceries, including produce and dairy, just like a regular supermarket. On one of my visits I saw, at the very entrance, one of the many reminders of Mexico's imaginary community, a rack filled with

packets containing the entire collection of Pedro Infante¹⁰ movies in DVD. There was also *norteño* music playing in the store and the DVD and CD section had an overwhelming majority of materials in Spanish, and a large section for *ranchero* music. This is why Walmart Tijuana embodies symbolic connectivities to Mexican frames of reference, and the nation's imaginary community. It is visually evident, by the types of products they sell and the music they play.

5.3 You are what you shop and where you shop: Supermarket distinction at the border.

In one of my conversations with Helena Martínez (see Chapter 2), we exchanged comments about local supermarkets and which ones we preferred. She said to me that she “sponsors the Fimbres”, implying that he buys at CALIMAX which is owned by Mr. Fimbres, a local businessman (see Chapter 2). I myself did my shopping in a *Gigante*, but my interviewee told me she did not like it because it was...

“Achilangado¹¹”, which she explained as follows:

MM: So tell me, why do you exactly mean with this comment that Gigante is “achilangado”?

HM: Well see they have these brands, and also a style...you go look for something and they do not have it, they used to but not anymore...

MM: I see, but at the same time, I see the produce is quite good...

HM. For that I rather go to Mercado Hidalgo, and Tuesdays or Wednesdays I cross to the other side and go to Henry's, and that's it.

MM: So the line goes down a bit by Tuesday or Wednesday?

HM: Yes, and also this is when you find the best deals, you save a lot, like 7 pounds of oranges for a dollar.

¹⁰ According to Wikipedia, legendary Pedro Infante is perhaps the most famous actor and singer of the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema, and the idol of the Mexican people a social phenomenon that has lingered for generation in Mexican pop culture.

¹¹ *Chilango*: Derogatory term to name those from Mexico city. *Achilangado*: With a *Chilango* style or a *Chilango* touch.

MM: Which Henry's do you go?

HM: J and Third.

MM: You take the Five and then J to the right?

HM: Right across "el Albertson", where I buy my natural products, sometimes I pay 59 cents for a pound of soy. I buy chicken, why?

Because I like to eat well, I like quality and here I go to the market and buy some other stuff, and so on.

MM: I see you have a bit more of freedom, you have SENTRI, but what happens to those who are stuck with Gigante or CALIMAX?

HM: Well many people find their way, my neighbor does not have SENTRI and she buys everything on the other side, she leaves at 9 in the morning and comes back very late, you get used to it, according to your needs and your pocket. There is also the old saying: "culture ends where carne asada begins"...

MM: This is what they say...

HM: Because there is a lot of people that do not know how to eat. So what are their needs? CALIMAX meets the needs of those people, if they only want a rotten lettuce, avocado, and tomato, *beat up steaks*, beans and chiles...

Like other upper middle class people I encountered in Tijuana, Helena was quite aware of the cultural importance of food, and during our exchanges she gave me many hints that confirmed to me that if indeed "you are what you eat", in Tijuana what you buy and where you buy it indeed says a lot about yourself. It is in this context I understood, for instance, a comment a Tijuana contact made about me when, years before moving there, I met with her to arrange matters for a research project: She told my boss that "like a good *chilanga*, I invited her to *Sanborns*", explicitly referring to the fact that this Mexico city franchise would be the last place that she, as a *Tijuanense*, would think of as a meeting place. Over and over again, I would hear from my female informants, that it was the new immigrants, the people who came from the "south", who "do not cross" the ones that constitute a market for stores like *Comercial Mexicana* or *Gigante*.

Part of Helena's comments referred to a sense of loyalty to local commerce. She argued she remained loyal to the Fimbres, because indeed she knows them, a family that has been "around" for decades. Also, she dislikes a store that brings *chilango* brands and shows the inconsistencies in customer service that are common in the south, where supply and distribution mechanisms not always work to perfection. In practical terms, this means that if you once find a product it is not a guarantee you will find it again. However, the last part of our exchange had to do with something more intricate, that has to do with people's needs and their relation to people's exposure to specific frames of reference, or narratives about particular products and stores. When she used the phrase "culture ends where carne asada begins" she was indeed twisting its meaning to its opposite. Originally, the phrase is an expression of disdain by which southern Mexicans make fun of the "uncivilized" north, which is too close to the United States, and has no history of ancient cultures, no major architectural jewels or historical landmarks. In her irony, Helena turned the meaning around to refer to those people, who, in their lack of "culture", or perhaps education, are content with "a rotten lettuce, avocado, tomato, a beat up steak, beans and chiles".

It is true that that the transportation of edibles to Tijuana has been eased by the roads, as well as new refrigeration systems and more efficient distribution networks. However, the enormous distance between this city and production hubs in the south still plays a role, and the quality of the produce one finds in local supermarkets is not always the best. So people that have no cross-border mobility in fact do have to content themselves with what is available. Yet, Helena also mentioned "beans and chiles", which is, historically, the base of Mexican's nutrition, again in the south and

center of the country. So, this “lack of culture”, was in her speech attributed to class differences, but also regional origin, of how those who seek “beans and chiles” will in fact have no need of anything else. They will be content with what they find, whereas some others, who know better (and are in the capacity to access it), will seek the Henrys, the Albertsons and the like.

With her talk about “lack of culture” Helena, who grew up in Tijuana during the 1960s, was in fact referring to people who had other cultural practices, either due to lack of exposure to products familiar to her, or conforming to obtaining what is available. While Tijuana historically had the capacity of choice and selected what was most convenient to them on either side of the border, people in Mexico had to content themselves with whatever the market had to offer. These people have other practices, as well as other tastes, they like Mexican brands that are familiar to them, and they are perceived to be *the ones* who patronize *Gigante*, *Comercial Mexicana*, *Ley* and so on. This may not be entirely clear cut, since some of the people who arrived in Tijuana in the 1980s and 1990s, have also told me that they shift their choices according mostly to the circumstances or what is available, more along the lines of what people answered when I asked them if they preferred Mexican or American gas.

New comers too, eventually learn what is more convenient to buy here, and what is better to get there. In their case too, life becomes an endless negotiation between the best options.¹² I myself experienced this as a new comer to Tijuana, when

¹² I thank Mexican scholar Norma Iglesias for making me note this, during an informal conversation about this dissertation I had with her in her office, at San Diego State University.

one of my new neighbors took me on a tour around the city where she showed me where to pay the utilities, and where to shop. During the stop at *Comercial Mexicana*, she showed me a Mexican brand of towels that is good quality for a decent price, but when we stopped by the plastic storage containers, she indicated to me “this you buy on the other side, they are 3 dollars cheaper”. Of course in order to do this, people must have mobility, and the places they consume depend largely on the spatial attributions of each individual.

Regardless of how accurate the belief is that new comers are the ones that shop at Mexican stores, what matters the most to me is the idea *per se*, the fact the long term *Tijuanenses* I interviewed all shared this impression. It means that Mexican franchises are interpreted to cater those who do not cross the border and constructed as hubs that connect consumers to Mexico. It then indicates these places of consumption have become social classifiers, a feature attributed to new comers by old timers (and perhaps the other way around), something that identifies them and distinguishes them, and that makes it clear that not everybody is the same: a boundary or a virtual checkpoint. In this, it is worth remembering a conversation I had with Helena about how to know who is who. “It is very simple” she said: “You need to look into people’s shopping carts”.

6. Mesoamerican Free Trade: Bargains and Leftovers in the Neighborhood *Sobreruedas* (Open Air Markets) and Swap Meets

Open air markets in Mexican streets are an ancient tradition. They were common in pre-Hispanic times. These were places where merchants brought products from the whole Mesoamerican region. Some of those markets have survived in the

same locations through the centuries, and still exist, nowadays, selling from produce and livestock to CDs, videogames and imported electronics. It is in the changes undergone by these markets, that one can more tangibly confirm the enormous effects of free trade in Mexico's material culture. In this, Tijuana is no exception. There are some well established markets, like *Mercado Hidalgo* (located in the *Zona Río*) and *Mercado Lázaro Cárdenas* or *Mercado del Popo*, in front of the cathedral. They have been there for decades; they are almost as old as the city itself. These markets are hubs of connectivity with Mexico, as they bring many Mexican products. According to Mr. Cervantes Pérez: "Though they have burned down several times, they have survived, precisely because of how popular they are. Everybody remembers having pumpkin candy, and that kind of stuff. They bring Mexican products, cheeses from Cotija, ceramics, and brooms"

Aside from these established markets, there are other types of sites which are locally called *mercados sobreruedas*, the same version of the *tianguis* that in central Mexico establish themselves each day in a different point of the city. These open air markets are very controversial, because of the traffic congestion they sometimes produce and because they rely on almost to no infrastructure. According to a local newspaper, the city of Tijuana has to close around 150 streets a week, and deal with an extra load of trash, because of the *sobreruedas*. They are the reason for a significant amount of complaints among the neighbors, because they often block people's access to their homes. However, these markets are a source of income for around 7, 500 families (Salinas, 2007) and they also represent an option of consumption for sectors

of the population that lack the mobility of a car or a passport. But, as Tijuana scholar Norma Iglesias said to me, “the global market reaches you, whether you move or not”.

During my fieldwork in Tijuana, I visited several times a *sobreruedas* located in a neighborhood that was founded in the 1970s, when the escalation in the influx of immigrants had started to make itself visible in the urban Tijuanan landscape. I visited with Tomás, the young intern, since he lives nearby. When he first arrived in this neighborhood, there was no pavement. Slowly, the neighbors had been obtaining services from the municipality, just like many Tijuana *colonias* that mushroom on a daily basis on the dry desert soil. The market spread across four or five blocks. In this case, the stands lined up along the street, to allow traffic to pass by, so one must be careful while shopping to not be run over by a car. In the market, there were all sorts of stands: some had *fayuca* or illegally imported American products piled on counters without no logic or classification (See Figure 3). You can find scotch tape, along with candy, toys, movies and medicines. Other stands sell food, fish, shaved ice, and used clothes.

I had to be careful when asking merchants where they bought their products. Some of them were distrustful and did not want to respond to questions, fearing that I might be an inspector or some sort of authority¹³. Others believed me when I told them I was just a student and revealed they bought their products in southern California at thrift stores. They also mentioned warehouses in San Ysidro. Those who want to offer really competitive prices go all the way to Los Angeles. “Hay mucho comprador”

¹³ In general, the city turns a blind eye to this type of business, although occasionally there are raids where police sweep the area penalizing people for bringing used or other unauthorized merchandise into the country.

(there are lots of buyers), one of the vendors told me. Sometimes, she went all the way to Fresno, using the trip to also visit her son. In the warehouses, one needs to buy more than a hundred dollars in order to get a good price. And they need to go often, so that the predominantly Asian owners get to know them, and give them a good deal. These networks are built by word of mouth. A third person said she buys in Chula Vista, with “Gisela”, in front of a Swap Meet. Aside from warehouses, vendors supply themselves from clearances and leftovers of various kinds, that people bring in their trunks to Tijuana to sell over at these *sobreruedas* and swap meets.

Other merchants sell only Mexican products like most of the vendors in the stationary markets like *Mercado Hidalgo*. Colorful brooms and buckets, aprons, fish, sewing supplies and hardware, all showing a visual taste of Mexico, the plastic table covers with colorful flowers, the plaited kitchen towels, *molcajetes* (mortars), *vitroleras* (flavored water jars) and manual juice squeezers, all obligated objects in any Mexican kitchen. At the same time, a lady was selling a gallon of American milk for 30 pesos, 8 pesos cheaper than the regular price. It came from Mexicali, she said.

Prices here are lower than in the United States. According to Tomás, you can pay 10 percent of what you would pay for a pair of headphones in the store, if you are lucky. A lady who sold used clothes and toys, particularly stuffed animals, said that some of her clients had a passport and some not. She mentioned to me that among her patrons, there are many people who “come from the south”, for a while, either to work or to visit relatives. These clients usually tell her she is making their kids dreams come true, because they would never be able to afford them, if they bought them at a store. There would not be enough for them to eat since toys in Mexico are so expensive.

Some seasonal immigrants buy toys from her when they are about to return to their hometowns in the south, presumably for their children, or other relatives. There are also many people from the neighborhood taking advantage of the opportunity to do their shopping in a close location. With the increases in the cost of transportation, these open air markets represent a good alternative for many people.

Even if in practice the difference is not so clear cut, as many old residents and border crossers do patronize the *sobreruedas*, this is a world that, in people's minds, belongs to the southerners. During my exchanges with Leonardo Sánchez (See Chapter 1), he talked to me about his family and friends, along with his ideas about life, the border and the future. One of his projects was to put together a mobile ice cream business, like those of "the other side", which he could circulate around the *colonias*. His idea was to bring the product, in this case ice cream, to consumers near their residence. In his words:

Another circle of friends is with the people who come from the south. The money for my business I am getting it selling at the *sobreruedas*. We buy things that they bring from the other side, and we sell them here, stuff for the family, food. We are well connected. We know many people from the south. They live like in the south, they don't know it here, they don't know what's up with the United States, either they were "returned", or can't go through and never been there. They make a whole new Tijuana that is like a *melange* of southern entities. They are the ones that started creating this informal commerce. There wasn't such a thing before. *When a society does not have the opportunity of producing their own products, they have to do it informally.* And there is a lot of potential, because they sell and make a lot of money. May be it is not legal yet. Piracy is a whole new distribution network, all the videos, movies etc. They sell around Tijuana. In every informal market they sell pirate music or film. They are the ones that have a new attitude, but I feel that those who are from here still have the advantage to be connected with the United States

In this conversation, Leonardo also touched upon the issue of piracy. He tied the emergence of piracy with the unavailability of products, or even more, the unavailability to produce one's own products. Piracy in this case, fulfills a desire to access products that are not available, or they are at an exorbitant price, it is in this case an "avenue of participation" (Liang, 2005, p.8), an alternative mechanism of access, through which some people can create avenues of participation in the new economy (Liang, 2005, p.8). It is an indication that, perhaps in contradiction with Helena's impression that people are "content" with what they have; stationary consumers are not excluded from the same frames of reference as mobile consumers. They may or may not have the same wishes and desires, but in Tijuana, their capacity to fulfill them is contingent not only on their disposable income, but on the spatial attributions given to them by the U.S. government. I decided to follow up on the issue with Alonso Muñiz, a local marketer, who gave me a couple of interviews in his office:

MM. And do you think that people who cannot cross the border wish to buy the same products, let's say GAP or other products that are popular around the world, but not available here?

AM: Yes, this is why there are pirate markets, and all the imitations, you should walk around one of those.

MM. I will visit the Swap meet.

AM: You will be surprised of how big it is. Hallways and hallways of jeans, and you know, they are all copies.

MM. Copies?

AM: Yes, I am referring to consumption parameters of imitation, it is aspirational, which constitutes a big chunk of the consumption pyramid. Seventy five percent are copies you buy something because you saw it, or because it is "in". There are many types of consumers, but copiers (*émulos*) are a base of consumers, teenagers, youths and those not so young, that grew up in the consumption era, in the eighties, where marketing had its peak in Mexico. They are now men in their forties and fifties that have those habits.

Not long after my interview with Alonso, I visited a couple of popular swap meets in Tijuana. Some of the swap meets and open air markets in Tijuana have emblematic names. For instance, *Mercado de Todos*, I kept on thinking on its name, *de Todos*, a market that belongs to everybody, where everybody can go, and the *Siglo XXI*, that perhaps suggests the future of Tijuana's landscape of consumption. A huge lot with stands selling products of any kind, the swap meets are perhaps different from the *sobreruedas* in that they are stationary, always in the same place, and do not sell produce or meats. There are however foods stands, where people can satisfy their craving for *fritangas* (fried tortilla delights), *atoles* (cornstarchy drinks) and *pozole* just like in any other market. The stands had everything in imports from used computers, jeans, baby clothes, DVD players, televisions...Some of them used, some others with dubious logos. As opposed to the *sobreruedas* I could not find any vendors here who were willing to talk to me. Their reluctance was even aggressive, they interrogated me about who I was, where I came from, and refused to talk to me. When I left I learned that a few weeks before my visit, authorities had raided the area and many vendors lost their merchandise and were forced to pay fines for selling irregular products.

Indeed, the government has an ambivalent relation with swap meets and *sobreruedas*. On the one hand, these markets are invested with an aura of irregularity, and even illegality, places where you can find *everything*, products of dubious trajectories, the Meccas of piracy. As places, these markets are constructed in terms of its dubious relation with the law. Often, authorities intervene in these spaces,

conducting operations where they raid hallways and stands taking over irregular merchandise. However, they also perform an important role in a city with few public places: they are nodal sites of contact between government and people, physical containers of a post-modern public sphere¹⁴ where private and public institutions reach out to people informally recognized as recipients of social services with selective programs like mobile health centers for children and elderly people who do not have access to a doctor (See *Invita Canaco*), charity activities like Christmas bazaars, and fundraiser campaigns to help firemen, policemen and other underpaid public servants. During election times, political candidates also tour the facilities, as they try to gain sympathies among vendor's guilds and unions, but also to give away food baskets for potential voters. Some of these markets also have the facilities to organize concerts, where *norteño* bands or pop artists play (usually for free) over the weekends, and mother's day celebrations and children shows are set up for family entertainment, in a subsidized manner.

These activities reflect the fact that swap meets are socially constructed as places for those of low income, interested in free health services or food baskets. Incidentally, customers here are seen as the potential consumers of irregular merchandise, which illustrates the discursive connection between poverty and illegality. In addition, this segment of the population is believed to not have entry documents. Whether this is always true or not, what matters here is that their identity

¹⁴ Thinking of marketplaces as public spheres converges with the privatization of everyday life, which, according to Arlene Dávila, "occurs as a result of globalization which, in its challenge to the centrality of production and the State as a guarantor of social rights is more than ever positioning consumption and the mechanisms through which people are being addressed as consumers as central bastions in contemporary politics" (See Dávila, 2001, p.10).

is constructed in terms of their lack of mobility. Piracy then becomes their only avenue of participation in the global market (Liang, 2005, p.8). In the classification system established by U.S. authorities, many of these people would be considered to be potential workers if given the possibility to cross the border, rather than consumers. Therefore, the halo of illegality invests both places and people. In addition, many of the consumers of pirate DVDs and MP3s are also believed to be dwellers of irregular housing, which nurtures the idea of the “illegal city” (Liang, 2005, p.6).

7. The Business of Shopping: Small Businesses, *Segundas*, Garage Sales and the Universe of Waste.

One of the first things that struck me about Tijuana when I arrived is the intense commercial activity that takes place everywhere. Every situation, place or loophole offers an opportunity to buy or sell something. As opposed to San Diego, spaces of consumption are not necessarily those designed or legally approved for that purpose. There does not necessarily have to be a permit, a monopoly to break, or a facility to set up a *changarro* or small stand, *tiendita* (store) or *fonda* (eatery). While some businesses are well established, people can improvise a store in their own garage, car trunk or living room.

Perhaps the most traditional “home-made” consumption spaces in Tijuana are the famous *Segundas*, or thrift stores. Their profit comes from the enormous amount of waste produced by wealthy San Diego. At a low price, they purchase washing machines, furniture, clothes that are discarded by San Diego consumers for newer models, more fashionable items, or due to the need for minor repairs. They fix them and put them up for sale in Tijuana. Regarding this, many of my informants have

anecdotes to share, about someone who made a fortune, or just a living, by buying stuff on the other side and reselling it in Tijuana. One of these characters, Don Oscar Cantu, ended up setting up an empire in the world of used washing machines. I learned about him during my conversations with José Salazar, an amateur historian who has devoted most of his life to gathering old documents and stories about Tijuana. Don Oscar relied both on his knowledge about washing machines as well as his friends, family and acquaintances to make his money during the sixties and seventies:

JS: He introduced in Tijuana the good washing machines. We learned with him that Kenmore is like a Ford or a Chevrolet, but if you buy a Maytag it is like buying a good car, so when someone wanted to buy something good they would say, hey Oscar, bring me a Maytag. He would bring the machines across, he would fix them here.

MM: So he would buy broken machines?

JS: Sometimes, but sometimes they were fine; they would give them to him as a gift, just to get rid of them. People in San Diego throw everything away, so he would go to the places where those things ended up, dumpsters or something.

As one drives around residential areas, it is not uncommon to see people setting up garage sales that last 7 days a week for a few weeks, months or years. I once met a family that was forced to leave the housing provided by FEMA, in San Diego, after losing their home during the 2003 firestorms. They established themselves in Tijuana and sold designer leather coats and purses in their own garage. Eventually, they changed their business to binational telecomm, installing American telephone lines for doctors and other businesses who wished to have a “local” San Diego number they could answer in Tijuana. Finally, when their financial situation improved, they returned to the United States. Their little garage store provided them with an

opportunity to start over. Like them, many families choose, in tough economic times, to sell merchandise in their own garage.

Some of those garage businesses I saw in Tijuana had become institutions around the neighborhood. This was the case of Don Cipriano's chicken garage stand, from which he sold fresh chicken from a farm his family owned on the way to Ensenada. Located in a crowded street where mothers would line up in their cars to drop their kids at school, Don Cipria had it all worked out with me: I would stop at around 2:45 and yell my "order" from my car window on my way to get my son from daycare. This gave him enough time to skin, clean and pack my chicken. Ten minutes later I would show up again, and he would run to my car window with the bags ready for me to take home. Eventually, Don Cipria and I started having long conversations about Tijuana. Perhaps someone told him I was interested in the city's history, because one day, out of the blue, he told me that forty years ago our neighborhood used to be a field where people would plant fruit trees and produce. I changed the time where I bought the chicken to the mornings so that I could talk to him longer, without having to deal with the afternoon traffic. Our conversations were productive in providing me an anecdotal background for the information I was retrieving from books and archives. They also gave me a sense of the nostalgic feeling many old timers feel for the city they lost when, in their own words, it got "discovered by everybody else". Eventually, I also learned that one of his brothers owned the neighborhood bakery where I bought my bread and another one a small hamburger stand that has become legendary in Tijuana. People, they say, come down from places as far as Riverside and San Bernardino just to eat at Randy's.

Like in other Mexican towns, Tijuana streets are also spaces of consumption. During my stay in Tijuana, I got used to buying oranges and strawberries from a family that managed to obtain them in Carlsbad, California, for a good price. They installed themselves in one of the avenues I took on my way home from work. No need to advertise anything, pay rent or, I should assume, taxes. They just parked their car and opened their trunk. That was the signal to customers that oranges were for sale. After a couple of weeks they already knew me, and I did not even have to get out of the car, which with a small baby was very inconvenient. Cash in hand, I just stopped the car at the intersection and did the transaction before the light turned green. In a nearby corner, oranges competed with pure breed puppies that were initially sold by people whose dogs had had litters, but eventually became a well established business for improvised breeders. In exactly the same fashion as the oranges, they just parked their cars, opened their trunks and took out the puppies, offering them to the passing cars.

Even for tourists who do not venture away from *Avenida Revolución*, it becomes obvious that small businesses are very visible in Tijuana's landscape. Establishing a small business is relatively easy and many families subsist from owning a small bakery, restaurant, *papelería* (office supplies), *ferretería* (construction supplies) and so on. In this, there is a relative freedom to set up a business, compared with the United States, where large corporations and monopolies have hindered such type of enterprises in the past decades. According to the latest census, there were 13,622 small businesses registered in 2004, which employed more than fifty thousand people (51 756 employees). The amount of large scale businesses was much smaller

(919 establishments), employing less than half workers (13, 689 employees) (INEGI, 2004).

When I asked Laureana Velazquez (See Chapter 3) if I could visit her family business in a traditional neighborhood of the city, she invited me to have lunch first. In fact, her little *papelería* is located adjacent to her mother's kitchen, so that she can still cook the family's lunch when there are not any customers. We sipped coffee in the diningroom, doors open all the way to the street through the kitchen and then the business. There, Luciana told me all the difficulties she must endure now that she lost the possibility of obtaining supplies in San Diego. She provided me with a very concrete example of how she experienced in her own life, the implacable impact of territoriality beyond borders: "Profits depend on where you buy", she explained to me. "You need to buy cheap so that you can resell at market price. So if you buy expensive national products, you are out of the game". American stuff is also new, it calls people's attention. The problem is not notebooks and pens, she said, since those are cheaper in Mexico anyways. The issue is the novelties, "what keeps my customers (particularly children), interested on patronizing my business: *Cars* pencil sharpeners, *Barbie's* pen cases, those ones that have a little light that turns on when you open them, small toys, stuffed animals, beanie babies". This is stuff she used to find in San Ysidro, in the huge warehouses that sell at wholesale prices residual products that can be bought in small amounts by small business owners, brought to Tijuana, and sold at a competitive price.

There are also other businesses that, despite being invisible from the city streets, represent an important piece in the consumer landscape of Tijuana: people's

living rooms and social networks. At the gym, at the school, at social gatherings and even parties, I got used to being offered products as diverse as vitamins, jewelry and beauty supplies, by people who, not having a structured job, supplement their income this way. Some of these home sales are structured following the model of Avon (make up), Andrea (shoes), or USANA (vitamins), where people become both consumers and vendors for these products. These catalog systems are very successful in Tijuana. Some of them, like Avon, spread throughout the city all the way to remote *colonias* with no public services like water, pavement or electricity, outside of the reach public transportation. Through groups of low income women who live in impoverished areas, these brands have been able to build an impressive customer base in marginal places. During my stay in Tijuana, I had the opportunity to visit a meeting that gathered vendors for one of these companies. I was introduced at the beginning of the meeting and they agreed to briefly talk to me about their experience with the company before they went on with their business. Most of them mentioned that, aside from giving them money on the side, and the obvious flexibility of these sorts of schemes, they had access to products they would not be able to access, mostly because of a lack of mobility: either because they did not have a car, or a passport.

Also when, in my middle class environment, I asked around about where to buy Mexican jewelry in Tijuana, my contacts directed me to a couple phone numbers of ladies who are known among circles of friends for bringing rings, necklaces and pendants from Taxco and other silver production hubs in southern Mexico. As it was impossible to find this type of product in an established business, I ended up touring people's houses looking for a perfect gift. In fact, I must say that I myself was once

offered the opportunity to becoming a “representative” of an educational materials distributor. I was invited by a neighbor, who had in turn sold me a few books and DVDs I needed for birthday presents. She obtained her supplies from someone who, based in Chula Vista, traded on both sides of the border, with children’s books, DVDs and CDs produced by educational institutions in Mexico City. For a small commission, I would have been expected to tour children related businesses in Tijuana, like hairdressers, daycares and clothes stores, and also offer my products among my friends and acquaintances at birthday parties or “ladies breakfasts”. However, the offer came almost towards the end of my fieldwork experience, and I declined.

8. Conclusions

In this Chapter, I have reported on fieldwork conducted at malls, supermarkets, small businesses, open air markets, transnational franchises, and second hand stores that populate Tijuana’s landscape of consumption. I have explained how these spaces nourish and represent differentiated practices of consumption as they are embedded in political, economic, and social relations (Mansvelt, 2005, p.66). From the upper end shopping malls in San Diego, to the neighborhood *sobreruedas*, these spaces represent and embody differentiated points of entry to the global market. Despite the fact that such markets reach everyone, since imported goods have become cheaper and more accessible, not everyone has the capacity to access them in the same way. I insisted in this chapter and will discuss in more detail in the next one that differentiated modalities of access represent in Tijuana much more than pure and simple social

distinction: they also reflect different spatial attributions that are conferred to local residents by a foreign state, expressing what I have described as a process of territoriality beyond borders. They also reflect people's relation to space because space becomes the vehicle of boundaries and virtual checkpoints among people. The power of two nation-states becomes visible because it forces people to redraw the boundaries of their own consumption practices to make them fit national territories. Their access to the market becomes then strongly influenced by the spatial attributions conceded by a foreign State and the legal frameworks that their own State establishes to regulate and mediate the transnational flow of products.

In his book *Acknowledging Consumption*, Daniel Miller observes that people in urban-industrial societies do not get all commodities delivered to them at the instant that they are wanted, but spend a considerable amount of time traveling and shopping. He then asks which movement and transport possibility boundaries can be identified as a result of this and why we are never told of them? (Daniel Miller, 1995, p.213). This chapter and the one to follow offer some clues to answer these questions. I talk about such boundaries, and discuss how they produce systems of difference that materializes in Tijuana's landscape of consumption and also permeate to all aspects of social relations. Such systems are in part supported by people's spatial attributions, which derive, as I have previously explained, from every individual's specific engagement with both the U.S. and the Mexican states, their levels of income, modes of employment and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, processes of identity formation.

It should be clarified, however, that the fact that different spaces of consumption produce and represent difference and differentiated modes of access to global markets does not necessarily mean that the people who patronize such places are constrained by such terms in their everyday life. Aside from people's mobility and relation to space, there are many other factors that determine the spaces of consumption they select at a specific moment, in a specific location. On many occasions, people choose where to buy depending on a variety of circumstantial, existential and momentary conditions that involves a person's mood, where an individual finds him or herself at a particular moment, an appealing sale or bargain, personal finances, the availability of time, a craving, etc. People who usually cross the border to do their grocery shopping may at some point decide to stay in a local supermarket if it is advertised on T.V. that their favorite brand of toothpaste is on sale. Similarly, those who usually stay may choose to explore a San Diego store if they happen to be "on the other side" visiting a relative. It all depends, says border scholar Norma Iglesias, on an incredibly complex variety of factors, and it is therefore very hard to determine that certain people shop in certain places (Personal Interview).

For these reasons, I have focused on general trends, and also on the ways in which local residents invest meaning in different spaces of consumption. This approach is informed by other ethnographies that have found that "shopping practices are related not so much to lifestyle choice, or the symbolic construction of commodities, but to the imaginings and fears of places and groups, with commodities a means of negotiating social relations connected to broader structures" (Mansvelt, 2005, p.63). Therefore, I do not argue here that *only* certain groups of people patronize

specific spaces of consumption. I do assume, however, that discourses and practices of consumption are powerful in locating bodies in particular places, emplacing identities (Mansvelt 2005, p.80). And, if it is true that people choose the place where they will consume according to a variety of circumstances, it is not rare to find more and more border crossers patronizing local supermarkets, thrift stores and *sobreruedas*, it is also undeniable that such choice is only attributed to certain types of people, those that in the first place have been found to meet the requirements to obtain a visa, who own a car or have the freedom of movement and, of course, time.

TABLES

Table 7. General Information about the San Ysidro Port of Entry

Crossing done by residents of border states	96%
One day trips	95%
Crossing by car	82%
Purpose for trips to the U.S.	
Shopping	42%
Work	24%
Other	19%
Social Visits	11%
Tourism	4%
<i>Source: Energy Communications Corporation</i>	

Table 8. Estimated Percentage of Sales to Baja California Shoppers

San Ysidro	69%
Otay	33%
Chula Vista	36-39%
National City	28%
Imperial Beach	28%
Coronado	10%
Average	34.8%
<i>Source: Crossborder Business Associates, 2002.</i>	

Table 9. Retail sales of San Ysidro Businesses (millions of dollars)

1993	3500
1994	1750
2000	2450
<i>Source: International San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce</i>	

Table 10. Retail Sales and Income of Select Border Cities

	1997 Per capita Retail Sales Percent of National Average	2000 Per Capita Income Percent of National Average
San Diego	91%	109%
Yuma	121	78
El Paso	83	67
Del Rio	86	57
Laredo	97	51
McAllen	168	69
Brownsville	75	45
<i>Source: Center for Economic Border Studies, University of Texas Pan-American</i>		

Table 11. Importance of Baja California Shoppers during Winter Holiday Season 2002 (%)

Very High	35.6
Somewhat High	24.8
Neutral	19.8
Somewhat low	7.9
Very Low	11.9
<i>Source: Crossborder Business Associates, 2002.</i>	

CHAPTER 5. VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL BORDERS: MEDIASCAPES, MOVEMENT AND SPACE IN TIJUANA'S MAP OF CONSUMPTION.

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss some of the ways in which the physical border that separates San Diego and Tijuana enforce boundaries that divide Tijuana residents in their own city, and how those boundaries materialize themselves in spatial urban arrangements that partition and divide the border population. In contrast to borders, boundaries are not necessary material: They are “both symbols and institutions that simultaneously produce distinctions between social groups and are produced by them (Migdal, 2004, p.80). Accordingly, this chapter will show the dialectic relationship between material and symbolic barriers that have produced, together, an exclusionary regime at the border that both reflects and enhances state territoriality in the region.

Since the border itself was established in 1847, the governments of Mexico and the United States have worked on instituting boundaries that mark the difference between one side and the other. These efforts are reflected in the measures I discussed in previous chapters, but also in the construction of institutions such as education, the media, novels, memorials, ceremonies and spectacles, etc. (Migdal, 2004, p. 76). Ultimately, they manifest a sense of belonging (both material and symbolic) to the State and its imagined community. In Tijuana and San Diego, there are multiple manifestations of this, from children's parades every November 20 (the anniversary of the Revolution) to air shows in the Miramar base. In Tijuana, flags and slogans are

there to remind us that as a sign that hangs in Tijuana's municipal palace reads: *Aquí empieza la patria* (here is where the motherland starts).

However, the divisive power of boundaries goes well beyond marking the separation between our two nations. They also establish distinctions among the people who live on each of the two sides of the border. I argue that these distinctions combine elements from both societies and are very much influenced by state policies that reconfigure the space where people live and move. These policies alter people's mental maps, nesting identities and differences, which ultimately modify shared narratives and reorganize frames of reference around products and spaces of consumption. But mental maps are only one part of the story. Boundaries are also made of what Joel Migdal calls checkpoints, or "sites and practices that groups use to differentiate members from others and to enforce separation" (Migdal 2004, p.6). Monitoring at actual checkpoints includes a variety of surveillance techniques, from checking visas and passports to practices of racial profiling. I have described some of these techniques in my third chapter. Virtual checkpoints are different. They include practices that go from scrutiny of modes of dress to detection of language and accent differences (Migdal 2004, p.6). Like boundaries, they produce and reflect differences among people that are not necessarily explicit. They are not dictated by law, or materialize in a gate or a fence. However, they are powerful in dividing and segregating in subtle but decisive ways. Studying consumption from an ethnographic approach has proved to be very useful in decoding virtual checkpoints at the Tijuana-San Diego border. It has allowed me to establish a connection between material

borders and restrictions of movement to the ways in which difference is established and interpreted among Tijuana residents.

In this chapter, I discuss some of the virtual checkpoints that are being built around material checkpoints in Tijuana. I refer to practices of every day life, both obvious and subtle, that act as boundary markers, which tip people off as to whether someone is a member of their group or not (Migdal, 2004, p.7) and place individuals in some spaces and not others (Mansvelt, 2005, p..80). As a “social, material and bodily experience” (Mansvelt, 2005, p.67), consumption is a virtual checkpoint, “constructed and maintained by people’s mental maps which divide home from alien territory, the included from the excluded, the familiar from the other” (Migdal, 2004, p.7). In this sense, consumption patterns are a quite insidious series of social distinctions that operate as processes of inclusion and exclusion (Edwards, 2000, p.131) which often has socially divisive consequences (Edwards, 2000, p.146). As I will discuss below, this logic of exclusion and inclusion goes, in Tijuana, beyond the issue of class, or even race, touching upon intrinsic elements of citizenship and membership, and expresses itself in mobility, dictated by the U.S. government.

2. The Melting Pot in Tijuana’s Consumer’s Landscape: Physical and Virtual Checkpoints

My mother who lives in Mexico City has had the same microwave oven for 25 years. She bought it second hand and every time it breaks, she takes it to Gustavo’s shop to have it fixed. She does the same thing with her blender, which she got as a wedding gift in 1969, her television set, and other appliances around the house. When I moved to Tijuana, I took with me an expensive seven year old blender my husband

and I had bought at a fancy San Diego appliance store. When we bought it, we expected it would last forever, but the blender broke a couple of months after the guarantee expired. I had checked with the manufacturer about having it fixed but it turned out that the shipping cost was significantly higher than just buying a new one. So I kept my broken blender on a tall kitchen cabinet, thinking that because I was moving back to Mexico, it would not be a problem to have it repaired.

During my stay in Tijuana, I embarked on the frustrating search for a local Gustavo, someone who would repair my blender for a reasonable price, with no success. When I asked people if they knew someone who could fix a broken blender, they looked at me almost with pity, they had no clue. *Cómo se ve que eres del sur* (it is so obvious you are from the south), they kept telling me. Why don't you buy a new one? They always suggested. "They are 19.99 in *la Walmart*". The blender did not make it back to San Diego two and a half years later. When the moment to pack came, my neighbor suggested that I donated my unwanted stuff to an orphanage, where the nuns ran a reuse business to collect money. "Don't worry if it is broken", she said, "they will find someone who fixes it for free, and re-sell it".

I have discussed before that because of the proximity to U.S. markets, consumer cultures in Tijuana used to be more in tune with those of the United States. Furthermore, I have also talked about the fact that the city has a long tradition of re-using San Diego's waste, its people being masters in finding a new life for things. But between these two extremes, there does not seem to be much of a middle ground. Despite Tijuana's great diversity of origins, classes and customs, consumer cultures in

the city tend to revolve around these two general traditions of waste and reuse, buy new and buy used, trash and repair.

Who adopts which tradition is not so easy to determine. On occasions, the same people may have both “styles” depending on the circumstances or a particular object. In the past, social class did not necessarily condition consumer cultures in a clear cut way. For instance, Ramira Lacave, who was born in Tijuana in the twenties, lives in an old neighborhood where some houses are made of reused materials; hers in particular incorporates an American garage door she uses as a wall. However, inside the small house, Ramira proudly owns several television sets. She explained to me that when her old one broke and she had to toss it, her children who live on “the other side” would keep on bringing new ones, so now she has them everywhere. Ramira has lived in Tijuana her whole life. She speaks English with no accent while she reiterates to me her undeniable “mexicanness”. She still buys her groceries in San Diego, once a week, when her daughter takes her to the same markets she has patronized for decades. As I observe her kitchen, I note she bought her pre-made curtains in one of those trips, as opposed to having them custom made, which is what *los del sur* (those from the south) usually do.

And this I know myself. When I learned that there was a *La Parisina*¹ store in Tijuana, I rushed there almost out of pure nostalgia for the trips I made as a child, when I accompanied my grandmother to buy fabric, buttons, or thread. She used them to extend the life of clothes that in Mexico are still three times the price as those in the

¹ *La Parisina* is a fabric store that was founded in 1933, in Mexico City. Nowadays, it has 285 branches and is present in all the country's states.

United States. When I was waiting in line to get the fabric I would use to upholster an old couch, I overheard a conversation between two ladies that reminded me of the different consumer cultures that co-exist in Tijuana. One of them was buying a curved needle she intended to use to detach the collar in one of her husband's old shirts. She would turn it around and re-sew them into the rest of the piece. "Shirts are so expensive these days" she said, "and by doing this, they end up like new, they will last one or two more years"...The ladies turned out to be from San Luis Potosí, and had been living to Tijuana for around 15 years. Never been to "the other side".

Indeed, Tijuana's patrons of my childhood's fabric store are often part of the huge migration wave of people from "the south" that invaded the city in the last two decades, that I referenced in Chapters 2 and 4. These people populated working class *colonias* around the city. These were the cases of *colonia 20 de Noviembre*, *Los Pinos*, and *Guaycura*, neighborhoods that were "a world in themselves". The people who live there may have arrived to Tijuana with the intention of working in the United States, and potentially migrating, but their connections to "the other side", if they were able to establish them, did not include the practice of consumption. San Diego stores were not significant in their mental map. Instead, the information they had about products to use in everyday life connected them to their places of origin, mostly in the south. And since buying a good reflects the information made available to the consumers (Douglas, 1979, p. 95), they constituted a market for stores like *La Parisina* and others like *Electra*, or *Comercial Mexicana* (see Chapter 2) that were familiar to them.

Born and raised in the area, local marketer Alonso Muñiz explained to me that the new immigrants have, in fact, generated a market for national brands. In his words:

Tijuana lived a hundred years without brands from Guadalajara or Monterrey. We never needed them. We ate ice cream from Chula Vista and had breakfast at Coco's, not because we were pretentious; it was the normal thing to do. People from the south attach other meaning to this, but for us it was the most normal thing to do. I cross (the border) to pour gas, come back and go on with my day, it is a daily activity and I am used to it.

To Alonso, the habit of shopping across the border did not have the same meaning locally as in the south. In other words, it was not a matter of status. It was, he said, "a very normal thing". Although the people I interviewed all agreed that the wealthy were more inclined to shop across the border, everybody agreed that it was not necessarily an issue of class, or a matter of status. In contrast to new immigrants, residents of old neighborhoods like *Lomas del Porvenir*, *El Soler*, or *Colonia Castillo*, that are located very close to the border, may not have been well off but they had a passport and shared the habit of crossing the border. This was Ramira's case. Different habits, different cultures that no matter how subtle and unspoken, started acting as boundary markers, communicators of exclusion and inclusion. Consumption patterns, in this case, acted like virtual checkpoints (Migdal, 2004, p. 6) between old timers and new comers.

But how do these checkpoints influence the way Tijuana residents relate to each other? The answers to these questions are extremely difficult if not impossible to find, precisely because of the vast array of individual trajectories that populate Tijuana's urban space and also because consumer cultures are not static entities that can be attributed to fixed groups in society. Consumer behavior constantly mutates,

and it is therefore extremely hard to categorize, moreover to attach it to pre-established categories of class or regional origin. Despite this, during my years of fieldwork in Tijuana I was able to perceive some trends in the landscape of consumption that are worth mentioning: First, as a result of the government policies I have described in the previous chapters, as well as the resulting demographic growth, virtual checkpoints are shifting gradually, as they increasingly mark boundaries between the rich and poor, and are becoming stronger than those between old timers and new comers. Second, immigrants from the south have not only adopted “local” ways into their shopping habits. They have also transformed consumer cultures in the city, by facilitating the introduction of new consumption patterns, tastes and references in Tijuana’s consumption landscapes that connect people to the south and center of Mexico.

On the one hand, shopping in the United States implies a combination of status and distinction that go along with the increasingly restrictive systems of access that I explained in previous chapters. It also represents a bypass to the exorbitant prices imposed by Mexican monopolies and chain stores on certain products. “Why give *Liverpool* (a fancy retail store from Mexico city) the extra cash if I can get my Clinique make up at its real price across the border?” my cousin told me when planning her next visit to Tijuana. Another friend of mine, who came to visit went straight across the border looking for an IPOD, which would be found at twice the price in any Mexican department store. This submerges border residents in a life of constant comparison, the non stop search of the best deal, of where to find cheaper and better quality. This condition has been characterized by local economists as *autonomy*,

the “autonomy, border citizens with an entry visa have to decide what they buy and where, within their budgetary restrictions” (Sierra and Serrano, 2002, p.702).

Here, budgetary constraints become important, since they are normally the main factors that condition someone’s consumption habits. Yet, at the border it is clear that there are other factors in place, directly related to the spatial attributions of every individual. But how can we know, in numbers, who is allowed to cross the border or not? Since the census is designed by demographers from the center, the proportion of residents that own an entry document has never been considered an item worth including in the population count. Occasionally, there are surveys conducted in selected part of the city², or estimates among marketing agencies or representatives of the media. There seems to be a consensus that, out of pure demographic pressure, the number of people who cross the border on a regular basis has increased overtime. In fact, between 1997 and 2007, the number of vehicles and pedestrians that crossed the international border northbound through the San Ysidro Port of Entry grew by 18.8 percent, and the number of pedestrians did so by 10.07 percent. In the case of Otay, figures increased by 67.63 percent while the number of pedestrians grew by 645 percent. In the meantime, between 1995 and 2005, population in Tijuana grew by a 42 percent. Although there are not official figures regarding the percentage of the population that has documents to cross the border, according to unofficial estimates the proportion they represent has decreased from 60 percent in the 1970s to 40 percent in current years.

² See for instance John Price’s work on *Colonia Libertad, Tijuana: Urbanization in a border culture*, U. of Notredame, 1973.

In 2001, a group of researchers conducted a survey to gather information about people's consumption habits in several border cities of Baja California. In 67 percent of the households they surveyed, there was at least one member that had entry documents (See Sierra and Serrano, 2002). The average monthly income in these households was around 800 dollars, the majority of whom had around 8 years of education and were both white and blue collar, small business owners and self employed (See Table 12).

In a given consumer culture, images and objects of mass consumption bring diverse audiences together, developing a marketplace. They also favor the emergence of a set of shared understandings, memories, tastes and habits. In Tijuana, these shared references direct demand in particular directions. Newly arrived immigrants change local consumption patterns at the time they adapt themselves to those that exist already, opening opportunities for new business ventures. During my stay in Tijuana, I closely followed the case of a young couple who had just opened a restaurant, where they hoped to sell *campobellos*, a specific taco product that is served in the surroundings of Mexico City's bullfight rings, but is unknown for northern Mexicans. While they hoped to make their product gradually known among old Tijuana residents, these entrepreneurs relied on new comers from the south to support their business, a sub-community of consumption (See Foster, 2002) that shared frames of reference unknown in the city. With this purpose, they decorated their small restaurant with images of bullfighters and other bullfight memorabilia, hoping to lure those belonging to this subculture. The owners of this restaurant also hoped to introduce new tastes and flavors into Tijuana's consumer culture, make their product known among local

markets, and introduce it in the repertoire of choices and tastes for both old and new residents.

As they introduce demand for new products and flavors, new comers also assimilate to some dominant habits. This is the case of Alejandra Gómez, a rural immigrant of indigenous origin from the state of Hidalgo. For her, part of the adaptation process to Tijuana had to do with a substantial change in her eating habits and self image. A few months after arriving in the city with her two children, Alejandra started having cereal for breakfast every morning. She saw that as a change, the adoption of a new way of life, of which an important component is being in shape. For this reason, Alejandra also started to work out at a neighborhood park, became concerned about her weight. However, she also became used, in her new life as an urban single mother, to taking her kids to McDonalds on Sundays. According to local scholar Leobardo Sarabia, it takes immigrants a while to learn “the behavior manual, or the codes of reference” according to which people find better prices or perceive a higher quality on “the other side”. Alejandra did not have the possibility of shopping on the other side, but she soon started patronizing *sobreruedas* and swap meets (see Chapter 4), where she had access to goods she would not have dared to dream for in her impoverished central Mexican hometown. She provided me a good example of the fact that, if Tijuana consumers cannot get to the U.S. market, the U.S. market will get to them³.

3. Virtual Globalization: Mediascapes and Cross-border Advertising

³ I thank Dr. Norma Iglesias, from the Department of Chicano Studies at San Diego State University, for making me note this in a clear and practical way.

In Tijuana, consumption of media technologies tends to be high: In surveys conducted in 2004, 92 percent of Tijuana's residents owned a VCR, 84 percent a cell phone, 58 percent a DVD player, and 36 a computer (Blanco, 2004). *Tijuanenses*, in fact, are known to be widely exposed to transnational media messages, information and technology that travel across borders. Mostly, Tijuana consumers learn about products sold in the United States through television, although there is also a very wide distribution of catalogs, coupons and fliers, that people receive at home (as I will discuss below) or in P.O. boxes they have in Chula Vista, San Ysidro and other areas across the border (See Table 13). According to Alonso Muñiz:

People living in the south do not have access to such things, the possibility to shop on the other side, but also the information we have, the information we manage, if you compare the average *Tijuanense* with someone in the interior or in the Federal District, or Guadalajara, I do not think they have the same frames of reference, from a consumption and information point of view, but also with technology.

Muñiz referred to an audience that is intensely exposed to cross-border media messages, and with those messages comes advertising. Exposure to ads from the other side of the border brings to Tijuana trends and frames of reference that are shared in the United States, making them "available" in the southern side as well. And advertising is a blueprint of how commodities create places (Mansvelt, 2005, p.58). Therefore, in the world of text, it is noticeable that advertising at the border projects images that flow across borders and are free of territorial constraints, sometimes ignoring them, sometimes challenging them, mocking or simply referring to them, both in subtle and open ways, giving viewers a power to control their environment (See Williams, 1980). In this, Tijuana is a vivid example that media images flow

freely across international borders, to reach audiences that by contrast face increasing difficulties to move across space.

In this section I will address the ways in which radio and television waves in Tijuana can produce a borderless space that bypasses the material border, reaching markets and audiences from both sides. I will also describe how the city landscape depicts, through commercial billboards on rooftops, walls and vehicles, complex and ambivalent border relations. Finally, I will discuss the case of coupon distribution in Tijuana, and explain how, as it becomes less virtual and more concrete, less textual and more material, advertising in Tijuana also becomes embedded in the territorial boundaries imposed and expressed by State power, both reflecting and producing virtual checkpoints, social distinctions and cultural differences among borderlanders.

3.1 Global Waves: Cross-Border Television and Radio Audiences

Doña Herminia González owned a small alterations business near my house in Tijuana. She worked in a room with one small window and a door facing a busy street, where customers had to park on the sidewalk to bring her hems, buttons, and all sorts of commissions to make costumes for school festivals, mother's day and Halloween. Business was surely good, although she charged just a few pesos for every piece; it was enough to keep her busy, along with her daughter and one or two relatives who worked with her in the *sastrería*. While she worked a forty-hour weekly schedule in her little room, Doña Herminia listened to the radio. Mostly, she liked K-Love; a San Diego based Spanish speaking station that played oldies and pop music.

When I visited Doña Herminia in her business, I was always intrigued by the constant exposure of this group of women to radio content, since it was on all the time. Occasionally, as I tried clothes and she took measurements, we listened to “contests” or marketing campaigns in the station along the lines of: “The first caller that responds to the following question gets free tickets for Juan Gabriel’s⁴ concert this coming Saturday in the Sports Arena”. Sometimes, the station would transmit from a street intersection where broadcasters would set up a booth and give free goodies to all the people who passed by: “And do not wait, come quick to meet us at third street and C in Chula Vista, and you will take home a free T-shirt with the station’s logo.”

Through the radio, Doña Herminia and the ladies who worked with her, along with the customers that stepped in and out of her shop, would hear, all day long, about places that were located on the other side of the border. It could be a concert hall or a street intersection, as well as ads that included businesses in places that Herminia did not know, since she had never been on “the other side”. She liked the station, because it broadcasted music from her youth, which resonated among all of us in the room, all women born and raised in the seventies. However, my curiosity about the references to places that were behind the wall, made me insist, in my conversations with her, on the issue:

MM: Would you like to visit all those places?

HG: I don’t have much mobility anyway. I am always surrounded by these four walls. If I need something from the other side, I ask my daughter. She brings me threads, and whatever I need.

⁴ According to Wikipedia, Alberto Aguilera Valadez , better known by his stage name Juan Gabriel, is a Mexican singer and songwriter who is one of the most famous living representatives of ranchera, mariachi, and pop Mexican music.

MM: What do you think when you hear about those stores, those concerts?

HG: I think it is about time that we get the same nice places in Tijuana...

In many ways, local stations that advertise products manufactured in southern Mexico reveal the realities of those who have migrated north. Nostalgia is a crucial component of this, like in the case of a magic hot sauce claims to make consumers forget about the “flavorlessness” of American food: “If you are tired of flavorless and boring food try *Salsa Doña Pelos*. The taste of home.” At the same time, public service announcements about diabetes among Hispanics in the United States, messages by President Calderón along the lines of “*México progresa*”, mortgage loans for residents in the United States to purchase houses in Mexico, and advertising for local supermarkets and stores (from both sides of the border), freely combine to produce contents that truly project a border condition. It is then, in the landscape and text of advertising, that narratives of hybridity and binationality substantiate themselves. The ads, however, reach a profoundly divided audience, not only by virtual boundaries of class, and mobility, but by the actual physical infrastructures that I mentioned in previous chapters.

Like radio, local Television stations simultaneously target Spanish speaking audiences from both sides of the border. By doing so, they produce a space where there is no border, a border-less place, where imagined communities overlap on contiguous territories. Media messages (music, pop-culture, celebrity gossip, and product advertising) cross the border instantaneously; with no hassle they escape the materiality of the border. “In a clear day”, says Gabriel Jules, who holds an important

management position with Televisa's local channel 12, "our signal covers all the way to San Clemente". "We target Latino markets, since there are not many alternatives among Spanish speakers". However, he made it very clear, "ours is not a binational channel and it does not foster Chicano or Mexican American culture. It is a Mexican channel". Despite this, channel 12 broadcasts advertising for businesses located on the north side of the border: furniture stores, insurance companies, fast food, and cell phones. From Tijuana, advertising revolves around local chains like *Calimax* and *Leche Jersey*, restaurants and also corporate accounts arranged from Mexico City that arrive through the national networks (channel 2 in the Federal District). Unofficially, an estimate of 25 percent of the advertising comes from U.S. based business and 15 percent is national, while the rest is local.

When it comes to the news, says Gabriel Jules, it is remarkable recent immigrants prefer national chains, while old resident's see more local programming, including news from "the other side". In this, the station constantly balances the needs of both audiences, which in part is reconciled by schedule differences: news at 6 pm, which is dinner time for many Americans, includes more news from San Diego and the region, while later at night; the majority of the content refers with events that occurred in the rest of the country. Regarding advertising, both radio and television channels use what is called a "rebound strategy" (*estrategia de rebote*) where stations from one side of the border will advertise businesses located on the other side, with the purpose of reaching markets on that side, and of course those who have the possibility of moving across.

I explained in my second chapter that exposure to American television has historically distinguished *Tijuanenses*, particularly the middle and upper middle classes, from other Mexicans, making them more familiar with American pop culture, and more in tune with fashion trends, music hits, and other consumer products, which required some knowledge of the English language. However, despite the fact that there is no historical data to support it, one could assume that this trend has gradually diminished, as Tijuana residents have more access to media products from Mexico. Worth noting are relatively recent studies of media reception at the border that have found a strong correlation between social class and preference for foreign media content. According to Jose Carlos Lozano's 1996 study, middle school students from the border region tended to prefer Mexican television over American programming. In his study, he found that upper class students, particularly those who spoke English, tend to be more exposed to U.S. media content although they overwhelmingly preferred Mexican products (Lozano, 1996, p.184.)

Lozano found in his study a preference for media contents in Spanish. This finding is consistent with the data I gathered in Tijuana, as the old residents I interviewed remembered the enthusiasm with which local audiences received Mexican television, primarily because of the language. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that San Diego Spanish speaking television and radio stations are very popular in Tijuana. These outlets, like the one Doña Herminia listens in her little *sastería*, target Spanish speaking audiences from both sides of the border, as they incorporate *Tijuanenses* into the broader Latino markets (See Dávila 2005). Here the border becomes a region of "intense encounters among Hispanic Audiences" (González, 2007, p.173). In fact, San

Diego and Tijuana form one of the world's largest international communities, with a population of nearly two million Hispanics (Telemundo, quoted by González, 2007, p.173).

In total, Tijuana audiences have access to 15 free television channels⁵, 8 of them from San Diego⁶ and four local⁷. Free television connects viewers with more U.S. channels, making it available for a wider audience. In the meantime, *Cablemas*⁸, the cable service companies, tends to expose audiences to more Mexican channels, since it provides services in other Mexican cities. According to some observers, topography in Tijuana makes reception of free television hard, and many people living in canyons or sites where television waves do not reach easily, end up paying for cable services⁹. Even if a significant portion of the programming comes from the United States, media content follows the same trajectory as goods which, as I explained previously, are mediated by the State. Media products are imported and brought to Mexico by centralized firms (national or transnational) who then distribute them to each region, including Tijuana. The programming is therefore filtered and selected according to a logic that caters audiences from the whole country, not necessarily those who live at the border. Materials are either subtitled or dubbed, and on many

⁵ Channel 33 (Telemundo), Channel 21 (TV Azteca) and Channel 12 (Televisa) and 45 Galavisión. Also get channel 13 from Mexico City (TV Azteca) and channel 2 (TElevisa), and 11 (IPN), which operates since 1998,

(González Hernández, 2007, p.175).

⁶ Tijuana receives from San Diego: channel 6 (Fox) channel 8 (CBS, transmitting since 1949), Channel 10 (ABC), 15 (PBS), 39 (NBC), 51 (KUSI) and 69 (WB). With some difficulty one can also see Channel 19 (Univision) (González Hernández, 2007, p.177-178)

⁷ Channel 12 (Televisa), Channel 21 (Televisión Azteca) and Channel 11 (Instituto Politécnico Nacional) (González Hernández, 2007, p.175)

⁸ Cablemas is the second-largest cable operator in Mexico. It has offered cable since the late 1980s, and broadband Internet since the late 1990s.

⁹ I thank David González Hernández, for making me note this in a conversation held at UCSD.

occasions they are also a few years old. This, in the context of Tijuana, creates a differentiated exposure to media contents, between those who have an unfiltered access to American media, which includes advertising, and those who are more connected to networks that are managed from the south. This gap is increasing now with the move to digital television on the U.S. side, making it more difficult for low income families to purchase the equipment needed to receive this type of signal.

3.2 The Border in the Street: The Language of Billboards and Ads

The dusty and sometimes sordid urban landscape in Tijuana is full of messages. Among them, the commercial billboards that plague walls and rooftops throughout the city are, perhaps, the most obvious and revealing of the border condition. Despite their lack of esthetic value (they have been forbidden for that reason in many U.S. cities), these ads are useful texts that often provide vivid interpretations of a space that is both fluid and partitioned. Some establish very direct analogies of the border with the human body. Some challenging ads lure audiences to territorial transgression, while others remind us of cruelties and wrongdoings that inevitably thrive in the chaos of border regions. There are San Diego businesses that place their ads throughout Tijuana inviting to save money at a particular store, conveniently located just a “few minutes from the border”. There are also billboards announcing services associated with the legal or financial aspects of crossing the border, either to shop or work, while more and more of them appeal to the comfort and convenience of staying. Later in the chapter, I will also describe ads that reflect upon

internal boundaries among Tijuana residents, marked by issues of status and social difference that are visually weaved together in spatial segregation.

Making reference to the border, one of these billboards advertised, for instance, a brand of yoghurt that was supposed to be particularly beneficial for a healthy digestion. It showed an aerial picture of the San Ysidro port of entry, the northbound lane being utterly congested, to the right of an empty southbound lane. This ad is the most graphic analogy I have seen between the border and the human body, a blunt comparison between wait at the line and stomach congestion, which could definitely use some lactobacillus to ease circulation. Interestingly, the words next to the picture did not refer to crossing the border, but to the “urban” experience of traffic: “Mejora el tránsito” (improve transit), it said, conveying in this case a blended projection of *the city* and *the border*, text and image complementing each other in the message.

When it comes to alcoholic beverages, the metaphor of “daring” also suggests crossings that do not necessarily have to do with drinking, as was posted by a tequila ad with a picture of a bottle and a note that said “*Atrévete a cruzar la frontera*” (dare to cross the border). A less obvious but equally powerful beer ad showed the picture of a man with his back towards the camera, carrying a six pack, with a green agricultural field in front of him. It was a low calorie beer, *light*, which in the picture also implied it was not heavy, easy to carry, presumably across the border to a promising green land with plenty of work. Indeed, the large amounts of young men who stop in Tijuana on their way to California’s agricultural fields offer a good market for which these types of ads undeniably resonate.

In the red zone of Tijuana, where prostitution is legal, as well as in the areas where pedestrians crossing from the United States usually circulate, there are frequently billboards that show pictures of children, little children, and a sign both in English and Spanish that says: “I am not a tourist attraction. It is a crime to make me one. Abuse a child in this country, go to jail in yours”. These ads are a harsh reminder of the fact that the border can be for some a moral loophole, a site where the most gruesome exercise of power also takes place, and where the human body is, again, an omnipresent subject.

Furniture stores located in San Diego have found Tijuana markets significantly lucrative. IKEA is particularly popular, because of its good prices and easy ways to transport the furniture without necessarily having to declare the merchandise at the customs booth. Aside from private individuals, the store is very popular among small business owners, and one can see its decoration “style” implanted in gyms, small cafes, bars and restaurants throughout town. In fact, IKEA marketers have found very creative ways of publicizing the store, with small signs placed on top of public transportation that do not have room for much, so they just include basic information regarding the store’s location: “*IKEA. Muy cerca del Estadio Qualcomm*” (very close from Qualcomm Stadium). This suggests that IKEA contracted with a local marketer, who for sure knows about the way in which *Tijuanenses* tend to find their way around San Diego. In Tijuana, visual landmarks are the key to finding an address, since people usually see no meaning in references to the number of miles, east and west, or the numbering system of American freeways. I have also seen IKEA’s marketing in

mobile billboards, placed on wheels that circulate around town, as well as conventional ads, strategically located close to the border.

“Shopping? Seguro de autos EUA”, was the message chosen by an insurance company from National City to advertise their services. In this case, the ad showed the body of a young woman, in a mini skirt, pink top and high heels who is carrying lots of shopping bags. The image only shows the woman from the neck down, leaving her face to the viewer’s imagination, perhaps suggesting that she lost her head in a shopping spree or maybe to say that it could be anyone in that position. And yes indeed, it could be anyone, anyone in a position to go shopping to “the other side”, which is perhaps why the ad was placed on the gateways to one of the main upscale residential areas in Tijuana. This gendered ad was obviously targeting the upper middle class and affluent, some of whom take the shopping as seriously as a fulltime job. To an agent in a border booth, these are the ladies in the expensive SUV with national license plates, who are routinely waved in without further inspection (See Chapter 3). As a market, they have also received some attention by local restaurants, which sometimes offer two breakfasts for the price of one on signs that explicitly say “damas dos por uno” (ladies two for the price of one), usually in the middle of the week, during working hours. In this, the connection between the border and shopping struck me one day when I heard a comment about a lady who temporarily moved to a city in the south: “She lives for her shopping. I don’t know how indeed she will survive, for so long, far from Tijuana”.

But shopping is only one side of the coin. Work is the other. A billboard advertising mortgage credit to commuters who live in Tijuana but work in San Diego,

was very revealing at a time when housing in San Diego became beyond affordable for most people: “Good Morning. Buenas Noches. Trabaja en EU, Vive en México.” (Work in the U.S., live in Mexico) said the message in this case. International commuters are in fact an important sector of Tijuana’s public life. In proportion to the total population, their estimated numbers may not very significant (around fifty thousand people). They represent, nonetheless, an important market with purchasing power, because they earn their wages in dollars while spending mostly in pesos. At the same time, they bring tastes and frames of reference from the United States (See Acuña, 1988). For decades, commuters did not have access to credit in Mexico, since they lacked the proper documentation to evidence their income, and paid next to no taxes. However, as policies have changed in the past years, and members of this group have become an important market for Mexican financial institutions, and the booming housing market in Tijuana.

In this dissertation, I have discussed some of the processes that have integrated Tijuana markets with Mexico’s production hubs. At the same time, I have addressed the fact that Tijuana markets are no longer ignored in southern Mexico, and how gradually, the logos of Mexican franchises like *Comercial Mexicana*, restaurants like *Samborns*, or fabric stores like *La Parisina* have made themselves present in Tijuana’s urban landscape. Recently, Tijuana customers witnessed the installment of another Mexican business: *Hospital Angeles*, perhaps the most expensive private hospital “chain” in Mexico, inaugurated a luxurious and impressive facility in a central location. Their advertising campaign clearly illustrated their objective of keeping home affluent customers that in the past would make their way for medical care across

the border: On a screen positioned at the entrance of upscale *Colonia Chapultepec*, they showed the linear signal of a beating heart with a text that said “*la vida te late mas de este lado de la línea*” (life beats better on this side of the line) emphasizing the fact that the verb *latir* refers both to a heartbeat and to the act of liking or “digging” something. In this case, the linear representation of a heartbeat was also used as an analogy with the other line, the one that is becoming increasingly time consuming to cross, suggesting that life is more likeable if one stays on the Mexican side.

Sometimes, shopping in Tijuana can be directly tied with other consumption related activities in San Diego. It is common, for instance, to use award trips to amusement parks in southern California as a marketing strategy to attract clients. These businesses offer their opportunities on billboards they place throughout the city, as well as in their own facilities, newspapers and television. This is the case of local supermarket CALIMAX, that has established partnerships with San Diego attractions like water parks, shows like Nemo or Disney on Ice, Sea World and Disneyland. Those who shop at CALIMAX, can then win a trip to any of these venues. In fact, in the entrance of the Chula Vista Water Park, in San Diego, there used to be a huge banner that said “We are a proud partner of CALIMAX”. If this sign may have been illegible to those customers coming from Fallbrook or Carmel Valley, it did resonate among those who came from Tijuana, particularly if they were redeeming their CALIMAX award. In a similar fashion, a local developer that advertises exclusive residences for sale offers to new owners a free trip to Las Vegas, airplane, hotel and drinks, all included.

Advertising around Tijuana projects the intrinsic polisemy of a city that hosts a diverse mosaic of origins, trends and timings. Perhaps more than in any other place, billboards and ads generate frames of reference that are only shared by specific sectors of the vast and complex border population, and yet offer a common denominator for everybody to understand. I usually wondered how people who had never crossed the border integrated this geography of names and references that seemed so close, so blended into everyday speech, narratives and conversations, and yet so far and out of reach. How do people actually navigate in this contradictory *mediascape* where media content travels easily across borders, while people's mobility is increasingly restricted by physical barriers? What type of mental geography is being produced in the minds of those who read on a daily basis that IKEA is close to the Qualcomm stadium or that Sycuan casino is the closest to the border?

I once met a lady who having lived in Tijuana for over 30 years, had never been in San Diego. Yet, she knew the names of all the stores; and exactly what to buy where, so she could ask someone to get a specific product in "la Target", or "la Walmart". Despite being out of reach, "the other side" is in fact very present in people's everyday lives. By walking or driving around town, and needless to say that also through conversations with relatives or acquaintances, people incorporate those spatial references into their mental map. The boundary that separates them from those who can actually picture places in the "other side" is very subtle, almost invisible, and may not become apparent in daily interactions. Yet, it is substantiated into stark differences between people's regional origin, social class and relationship with an

alien logic of inclusion and exclusion that few can arrive to understand in full, but that increasingly affects everyone.

3.3 The Geography of Marketing Discrimination: Coupon Distribution and Segmented Populations

For 25 years, Don Horacio Ramos has made his living off Tijuana's consumption habits. In the 1980s, he started doing market research for businesses in Chula Vista and San Ysidro, when he participated in the studies that made possible the construction of shopping centers and malls in the area, such as Plaza Bonita and others of lesser size. These major projects also came hand in hand with urban developments such as the construction of Interstate 805 that provided an alternative north-south route to Interstate 5 (See Map 8). Those establishments would not have survived exclusively with clientele based on the northern side of the border, says Ramos. It was not large enough at the time and local residents did not have the income to support such large businesses. Mexican consumers made a big difference; they guaranteed them the profit they expected to obtain in order to succeed.

Nowadays, Don Horacio's business, *El Cupón de la Semana* (the weekly coupon), consists in distributing a booklet of discount coupons for San Diego stores in Tijuana. His main contractor is a San Diego newspaper but he also provides the service to numerous clients that wish to establish a clientele among Tijuana residents. A few months after moving to Tijuana, I started finding *El Cupón de la Semana* on my doorstep. I found it intriguing to receive a plastic bag containing all sorts of promotions and coupons for American stores in my Tijuana residence, so I decided to call the number listed in the package. After consulting with some colleagues at work, I

realized that not everybody received those coupons, and I then became more interested in the nature of this business, the rationale behind the routes, their distribution system and the market niche it had found. It was not hard to get a hold of Don Horacio, who received me numerous times and responded to all my random questions. He also showed me the operation system of his business and allowed me to visit the facilities where he managed it.

Don Horacio has perfected a system to target markets in Tijuana that combines a comprehensive knowledge of the city's social and spatial complexities. The booklets include coupons for Macy's, J.C. Penney, Target and other stores. They all have a barcode that allows marketers in San Diego keep track of who is redeeming those coupons, and which areas of Tijuana are more active in consuming at a particular store. "We then know the bag in which each redeemed coupon was placed, we know where those people are coming from", he says. The barcodes also provide information if the purchases were made with cash or credit card. He found out, for instance, that transactions during the week are mostly made with credit cards, which makes us assume they involve U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or old Tijuana residents who have maintained their credit and social security numbers. In contrast, most of the purchases made during the weekend are cash transactions, which indicate other profiles for these customers.

El Cupón de la Semana delivers 150 thousand coupon packages every week. There are warehouses on both sides of the border where they assemble the product, and get it ready for distribution. The last stop in Tijuana is a large garage located in an industrial park, close to the Otay port of entry, where the packets are placed into all

wheel drive vehicles of moderate size, sturdy enough to endure the uneven pavement, each of them with an assigned route. Don Horacio's incomparable efficiency over the years has kept his business almost free of competition. On more than one occasion, he says, marketers from San Diego or Mexico City have tried to unsuccessfully operate in the area, but failed because they did not have the capacity to conduct their research to the degree of detail don Horacio has achieved. "We have a first world business that operates in the third world", he says:

Our competition does not want to invest in the vehicles required to actually penetrate the market effectively. They prefer to distribute fliers at the border, which may look nice but is inefficient because when you are in line waiting to cross, you already know where you are going, what you are going to do, what you are going to buy. This is why *El Cupón* is distributed on Thursdays and Fridays, so that it is ready for the weekend

Surveys, fancy software, census and databases have a limited impact, given the enormous heterogeneity of Tijuana's spatial distribution, where it is not rare to see affluent residences right next to shacks. "We use the census", says Don Horacio, but "we use it intelligently". When I ask him about his system, he replies to me he uses "visual discrimination" to determine who is a potential client and who is not. "This is my software", he jokes. It involves active and constant scouting, getting into the neighborhoods on a four wheel drive vehicle and drive around finding clues in the housing that allows him to determine who is in a position to be a customer and who is not. So market discrimination is done here on a one to one basis. This is one of the ways in which he is "constantly pulsing the city, by looking at markets. Our service is not only picking up and delivering. We give our American clients all the information, knowledge, history about how this works. I have a map of Tijuana, of how it

developed in the twenties, the thirties, forties, and fifties, how it grew, I have it in color, we study everything.”

The three elements to determine if a household should be included in the database are: passport (entry documents to the U.S.), car and telephone. In addition, says Don Horacio, “People are constantly requesting our services. Right now we have 40 thousand requests that we cannot supply, because we do not distribute in the area”. When I mentioned to him a couple of areas that I knew have no infrastructure (pavement, water, or other services) and asked him if he could reached those parts of the city he responded:

You know the problem in part is the streets, they are fatal on our vehicles, I cannot get into unpaved street, because of the mud and rocks when it rains. Because once we start delivering, we have to stick to it, by contract; if not our American clients will know we are not doing our jobs. Some of their employees are from Tijuana, and they report on us if they did not receive the package.

In the conversation, Don Horacio jumped straight from mentioning how to delimit the market to talking about people’s mobility:

HR: “And look, because we are catering to our American clients, you have to cross the border, so that will tell you our clients have to have a passport or a laser visa, which makes us eliminate one quarter of Tijuana.”

MM: So you would say one fourth of Tijuana’s population does not have entry documents? Do you think this percentage has lately increased?

HR: Yes, because there are a lot of new people from the interior, and you know, they want to work.

MM: So their intention is working and they are denied visas?

HR: That is right. Yes. Inspections are more thorough. There is a more secure profile, this new terrorism that affects all the government.

MM: So this is why they deny visas?

HR: Well see, there is now an American data base, we don’t have access, but they know everything. This is why a line like the SENTRI works, you get a pass but you have to go through an FBI investigation,

you have to deliver your entire fiscal life and your whole family, it is there in that computer, they can follow you, all what you do when you cross, when you come back, all that is being managed now, they control entries and exits in a tremendous way.

During my conversations with Don Horacio, I was drawn by the connections between market discrimination and spatial distribution. If it is true that there is a lot of income diversity, particularly in the city's oldest neighborhoods, I noted a common narrative among marketers in the region that distinguishes the areas that are more "interesting" for American businesses: The affluent parts, located in the middle of town, that surround the Racetrack and golf course are the most targeted (See Map 7). They also have the easiest access since they dispose of paved streets, security and all needed infrastructure. Some traditional neighborhoods, particularly those adjacent to the border (See Map 1) constitute a second area, where the presence of old residents makes it attractive to some marketing efforts. This is where people like Ramira Lacave lives. Finally, there are "pockets" throughout the new areas located in the south and east of the city that may represent an attractive market.

The connections between affluence, mobility and distance, are present since the 1980s, as noted in one of the studies that preceded the construction of the shopping center in *Zona Río* (see Chapter 2):

Shopping frequency in U.S. businesses is also determined by the distance of the residential areas with respect to the borderline, since such frequency tends to diminish as distance increases. However, another variable that determines consumption in U.S. establishments is the level of income: As the level of income increases, the proportion of total expenses made in U.S. businesses goes up, and viceversa. High income groups search products of better quality and are more demanding in their taste, so they are willing to cover the distance and visit the U.S. more frequently (*Centro Comercial*, 1979?)

In more technical terms, local scholar Tito Alegría was able to establish a systemic relationship between the economic-spatial structure of retail trade and services sub-centers and social-residential segregation of population groups by income level in Tijuana (Alegría, 2006, p.97). According to Alegría, Tijuana's wealthy areas "benefit from their long-established and continuous identification as prestigious neighborhoods (...). Social distinction, premised on what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, arises from this practice of consumption operating in a spatial dimension and materializing as residential segregation" (Alegría, 2006, p.110). Alegría did not include here shopping in the United States. However, he connected the level of income with access to commercial centers and he concluded that wealthier residents tend to reside in areas with higher level of accessibility to such centers. He also concluded that the price of accessibility to shops is potentially higher for lower income segments of the population and lower for those at upper income levels. In his words: "The price of accessibility operates on the basis of segregation by location, which involves the isolation of certain social groups with respect to urban resources" (Alegría, 2006, p.121) In other words, wealthier residents have easier access to retail centers and therefore have to pay a lower price for consuming.

In opposition, remote areas that do not have urban infrastructure suffer from lack of access to spaces of consumption. Public transportation is expensive and, according to Alegría's findings, most commercial activities are concentrated in Tijuana's central areas. This is consistent with what I found in several neighborhoods, where I interviewed small business owners who profited by making available in their shops overpriced products that would otherwise be difficult to obtain, particularly, if

the customer does not own a vehicle. This is the case of Laureana Vázquez, the woman whose ordeal to recover her lost visa I previously recounted. Laureana's *papelería* makes available products that are otherwise obtained either in the downtown area of Tijuana, or "the other side". In the Christmas season, she also sells toys and other items that have a demand because, even if priced more than in these other locations, they are still more affordable if one considers consumers will save transportation costs. "If you think of a family of four, let's say the mother, and three children", says Laureana, "this is three bus tickets, they might as well stay in the *colonia* and pay a little extra for these items. This is how I make my profit".

In Tijuana, neighborhoods are never one hundred percent homogeneous. However, there is a shared narrative that tends to associate communities that are disconnected or remote, do not have access to social services and do not represent an attractive market for U.S. businesses, with people's lack of mobility, which can be related to transportation costs or spatial attributions marked by the U.S. government. If it would be very difficult to illustrate this in quantitative terms, it is accepted as a virtual checkpoint that separates people and communities. It is in this framework that one could understand, for instance, the story of Lila Mendoza, a neighbor in a low income *colonia*, that despite of its geographic proximity to the main arteries of the city, remained isolated by the lack of paved streets, water infrastructure and electricity. In her neighborhood, Lila was considered to be among the better off. The reasons were several, one of them being that she had a visa. In this case, what called my attention the most was the ordeal she had to go through in order to obtain her document, once it was approved. After paying for all the required fees, Lila provided her address to the

courier service the U.S. consulate contracts to distribute the approved visas to the applicant's residence. She covered the shipping cost but she never got her visa. After lengthy inquiries with those responsible, she found out that because of where she lived, the courier company had chosen to not deliver the documents. Lila was furious and decided to sue the American Consulate. When they told her she could pick the document in a centrally located office, she insisted that she wanted the visa *delivered in her home*. She won. When she talked to me about her experience, she framed her struggle as that of a victim of discrimination because of the area where she lived.

4. Borders and Boundaries in Tijuana's Landscape of Inequality. Bodies that Move, Bodies that Don't

Many of the businesses I have mentioned above survive because their owners are able to take advantage of the proximity to the United States, which allows them to obtain cheap products on "the other side" and import them in small amounts into Tijuana's market. Without this option, hair dressers, car shops, food establishments, and specialized little stores would lose the advantage that enables them to profit from the differences between the two economies. Their mobility makes them competitive against small entrepreneurs who do not have documents to enter the United States. The ability to cross the border does give them indeed a material advantage. The esthetician, who owns a small beauty parlor and is able to supply her businesses at the stores in Chula Vista, will be able to stay competitive in a market where nearly all cosmetics and beauty products are imported from the United States. The mechanic who owns a shop and can bring auto parts from the junk yard, is materially better off than a person in the same trade who is forced to buy the pieces from a registered

importer, an intermediary or who has to ask the customer to provide their own materials. By the same token, a coffee shop owner who can bring certain fancy ingredients and flavors from the “other side” will attract more of a well informed public that expects the same products that are made available.

With the increased restrictions to cross-border movement and the growing list of requirements to obtain a visa, mobility has become an asset, more than ever, in Tijuana’s economy. Those who indeed can negotiate the proximity of the two economies, and move back and forth between them are in a position of advantage. They also have the possibility becoming suppliers of those who are not mobile (stationary) slightly inflating prices while making those businesses less competitive than the ones whose owners can move freely at their choice. In recent years, I have heard of more and more people dedicated to the purchase and sale of items, who are unable to renew their visa. With this, they are either out of business or at the mercy of intermediaries. In the following 5 years, the first laser visas will expire (they have a duration of ten years). Therefore, it is likely that, unable to meet the standards of income and “purity” that I discussed in my third chapter, more people will be denied renewals. If ten years ago, Tijuana residents were able to trade their crossing cards for the laser visa without much trouble, this time they will be finally subject to the same regulations as anybody living in any other part of Mexico, regardless of the fact that Tijuana is a border city.

At first glance, the difference between mobile and stationary consumers is not necessarily obvious or visible in Tijuana’s everyday life. In fact, one could even argue that it does not really matter if a person can or cannot cross the border. After all global

markets reach all of us, whether we move or not. People in Tijuana do not see the possibility to go to the United States as an attribute but a verb, a habit, which, in everyday language, is expressed in terms of “crossing” or “not crossing”. People “cross” or not “cross” for a variety of reasons, that can range from having a car with no license plates, a full time job that reduces the “crossing” opportunities to the weekends, when it is more crowded, or not having a passport or visa. Also, it is rarely seen as a permanent situation. Many people will say “ahorita no estoy cruzando” (*I am not crossing right now*) and that is a sufficient explanation. Only those extra curious like me would sometimes dare to ask why, and then get all sorts of responses like: “*me estoy emigrando*” (I am emigrating myself, which means the person is processing a Green Card)¹⁰, my visa expired and I have not gotten a new one (it is never clear if the person has or not applied for a new one), or simply I do not have a car, and it is hard for me to go.

During the time my own paperwork process left me for months without possibility of crossing the border, my neighbor once told me about a new baby clothes small store that had opened nearby my house. “I think it is a good option”, she said, “for people like you, for instance, *que no cruzas*” (that don’t cross). In that case, she identified me with *los que no cruzan* (those who don’t cross). She identified this category as different from her. What did it mean? It can be very vague: a way of life, different culture, different habits... a hint of distance between ones and others that is not easy to determine, but it is there. They are, according to Helena Gálvez, the ones

¹⁰ Depending on the case, the applicant is unable to travel to the United States until the paperwork is ready.

who buy certain brands of cookies (see Chapter 2), or to Marina Gutierrez, who shop in certain places like *Ley* or *Comercial Mexicana* (See Chapter 4). They belong to a different circuit, a separate network, they have different frames of reference, and they construct different mental maps in their own lives. Some say it is a question of *social status*, but there is still something else.

A few months later, when I was able to go to San Diego but did not have yet a SENTRI pass, my doctor was designing a new diet for my cholesterol, and advised me to get a particular salad dressing that could be found in Whole Foods. When I said I would not sit in line for hours just to get a salad dressing, she looked at me with an estranged gaze, as if I had said something inappropriate, and said.... “Well, if you don’t cross, here are other options for you....” She gave me a few suggestions of products I could obtain in Tijuana. I saw in the doctor’s response a sense of unease; I felt I had “crossed a line”, the same effect as when I asked the lady in line next to me at a Las Americas’ store if her cousin she was buying clothes for could just return them in the case they did not fit (See Chapter 4). I was not *expected* to give such an answer; I produced in her disconcertment and discomfort, I disclosed something about my own mobility, as if I had shared something very private that to me had exclusively to do with my options for salad dressing.

Indeed, the issue of crossing or not crossing the border is rarely brought up in casual everyday conversations among friends and acquaintances. Anecdotes about the last arbitrary actions at the consular windows, which include denying visas for the craziest reasons, circulate from mouth to mouth in a “but you haven’t heard this one” fashion. Yet, people do not make explicit in their everyday interactions what are their

spatial attributions. Still, during my stay in Tijuana I heard interesting comments about how such attributions affect social relations that are worth mentioning. For instance, on one occasion, an acquaintance was choosing a location for her son's birthday party. When I suggested a park in Mission Bay, she replied that for her "the other side" was out of the question. "I have a brother that does not cross", she said. How so? I asked. The conversation went off the subject several times, but I was able, this time, to subtly work my way to a response: "He never bothered to get his visa when he was young. He was radical, he hated the United States. He then married someone that did not have a visa. Lately, he tried to get one, but it was impossible, he did not have a history with them, I guess. It's like having credit you know..."

In this person's case, the fact of having a member of the family unable to cross the border did influence her choices for a party location. However, in many situations, people organize their social gatherings at Sea World, a San Diego county park, or at a relative's house assuming everybody will be able to attend. Those who can't be present for legal reasons are simply left out. For instance, I was shocked when, doing the RSVP for the end of the year picnic near Coronado Bridge, a staff person from my son's school asked one of the mothers if she was planning to attend. "In your trunk?" She replied, causing a shadow of embarrassment in the list lady's face, and the issue was instantaneously forgotten. This is how I met Laureana Vazquez, and learned about her story. I decided to call her and ask for an interview, and eventually she invited me for lunch and to visit her small *papelería*. She then told me about the warehouses where Tijuana's *changarreros* supply their business. Intrigued by the importance of the unsaid, I asked one of the assistants that took care of my son if she

was attending the party. This woman was one of the daycare's oldest employees; she had been working there for almost 15 years, and was considered to be an institution for children, parents and teachers. "Unfortunately I do not have a passport", she quietly said. "I have never been in San Diego". Initially, I couldn't understand why, despite the fact that some very important people in the daycare were not going to be able to attend the event, the organizers had still decided to do it in San Diego. Later on, I asked a group of friends about this and they all agreed it was a question of status. Everybody in the school was assumed to be able to go. Those who were not would be excluded, since after all, "there are not that many places in Tijuana where you can organize a picnic right?" they said.

Indeed, certain people are just assumed to be able to attend an event on the other side, and some are not. In Tijuana, people's spatial attributions increasingly relate to processes of identity formation, in "creating meaning in the space of one's physical body, which also involves a consideration of how our bodies are interpreted and located in under discursive and material contexts" (Mansvelt, p.81). The same way parents in my son's daycare were assumed or expected to attend the picnic, it is noticeable how certain people are commonly assumed to not cross the border. Domestic workers, for instance, are informally categorized as non-crossing. A domestic worker that actually has a visa is considered an oddity. I once tried the issue in a conversation with a group of upper-middle class ladies. They talked about birthday parties on both sides of the border. The conversation revolved around the fact that, when attending birthday parties "on the other side", they cannot bring their maids with them, so they have to watch the kids themselves. I mentioned a particular case of

someone who indeed, brought the nanny to parties on both sides and the generalized question was: “How come? A maid with a passport?”

The issue of domestic workers made me curious about the existence of a social group that is explicitly and historically categorized as immobile. As I previously mentioned, domestic workers are among those who had always had it very hard to obtain entry documents to the United States. This has to do with the informality of their employment conditions, the fact that many of them do not have social security, or any mechanism to prove employment. In many instances, domestic workers are invisible entities, because they are paid cash on a weekly basis, and often times not even their own employers know their full names. In the binary consumer/laborer that I discussed in my third chapter, domestic workers would indeed represent the prototypical laborer, the “undesirable” body that U.S. customs and immigration agents at airports and ports of entry skillfully detect, detain and deport on a daily basis. And indeed, everyone in Tijuana knows a history of a domestic worker who either temporarily or permanently “worked” on the other side. Many arrive to Tijuana in the hope that they will eventually make it across the fence. In Tijuana, domestic work is relatively better paid than in the rest of Mexico: a full day of work is paid in an average of 20 dollars (as opposed to the 10 or 13 in southern and central Mexico). In the United States it could easily be 4 times more. Many stay in Tijuana until they gather the money for a *coyote*, and their Tijuana *patronas* (employers) will often complain that “no matter how well you treat them, once they get the idea in their minds, to cross the border and work on the other side, there will be nothing to change that, and they will eventually leave”.

During my interview with Alonso Muñiz, the marketer that lived his whole life in Tijuana, we explored the differences between mobile and stationary consumers, in other words, those who “cross” and those who “do not”. It became clear to me that, even though those cleavages were not so abrupt in the past; there were always some people, like domestic workers, categorized as immobile or stationary:

AM: Passports are very linked to income, the problem of employment in the United States and migration that makes them take those type of economic decisions, you have to provide evidence of making so much money, to convince them you will not look for employment, that is the problem these guys have, so they can say we are terrorists, but we aren't, the requirements these pals demand are related to labor issues.

MM: But when you were young, you mention that “everybody” had a passport, but there were always people without one right?

AM: Yes, in the socioeconomic level in which I grew up, everybody, and if we go a bit lower...I do not want to be contemptuous, I don't like it, I am not, but sectors less privileged than mine also had a passport.

MM: Also.

AM: Of course.

MM: The maid had a passport...

AM: No, the maid definitively not.

During my stay in Tijuana, I was often intrigued when I called a friend's house and the maid told me “she is not in, she is on the other side”. How would domestic workers experience the fact that the whole family comes and goes from a place that is inaccessible to them? It could be seen from a perspective of class differences, since aside from the other side, domestic workers would also be banned from a country club, for example. Like a young journalist I interviewed said to me when arguing that the difference is not “spatial” but “social”: “the guy who cleans my windshield at a crossroads is doing so regardless whether I am going to work, to see my mom or to wait in line”. Indeed, some globalization scholars like Bauman are already talking about mobility in association with social class: “The present day combination of the

annulment of entry visas and the reinforcement of immigration controls has profound symbolic significance. It could be taken as the metaphor for the new emergent stratification” (Bauman, 1998, p.87). In Tijuana, this kind of stratification shows in subtle but blatant ways. An example of this can be the perception that in recent years, people driving cars with the SENTRI transponder attached to their windshield are more likely to be kidnapped, particularly by street criminals who look for an indicator of wealth and status in their potential victims.

However, even if spatial attributions are becoming a social marker, they are not exclusively linked, yet, to social class. Is there then a difference between crossing an invisible boundary in a country club with a physical barrier like the U.S.-Mexico border? Do they produce the same systems of difference, or are they different? I argue that in Tijuana, we can find clues to answer this question by looking at consumption and its power to deconstruct what is apparently invisible. Discourses and practices of consumption also locate bodies in particular spaces, emplacing identities. Places in turn, influence process of embodiment, influencing rituals, practices and consumption through which they are made meaningful (Mansvelt, p.81).

Regarding this, I learned, during my stay in Tijuana that part of the *patrona-sirvienta* (employer-domestic worker) relationship at the border is intrinsically related to consumption. In the private sphere of a middle and upper middle class household, *patronas* are mobile as a standard, assumed to be able to cross the border while *sirvientas* are not, they are stationary. *Patronas* are then expected to shop for their domestic workers, sometimes as a gift and sometimes not. It was not then strange for me to find acquaintances in San Diego stores who were shopping for their maids. One

of them, even took pictures of potential items the worker may like, took them back for her to choose a dress or skirt of her taste, and then bought it on the next trip. “This way I save lots of time. If she does not like it, I don’t have to drive back to return it”, she said.

Desire is global but the possibility to fulfill it is not (Bauman, 1998, p.85). I myself felt the impact of such phrase when one summer a young valet who often praised my Crocs shoes once told me he wanted to buy a pair for himself. He asked me where I had bought them: At UTC, in San Diego, I said. I saw his expression become somber and said...”Oh then, I can’t go there. I offered to buy them for him: “give me your shoe size and preferred color, just please don’t tell me later that you don’t like them, I don’t want to have to return them.” We agreed on that, but I never saw him again. He quit his job. In an interview with a college professor at a private university, I asked if his students could cross the border. He responded to me that recent generations of people have been very affected, since *they* (U.S. authorities) are getting very strict, *they* are forcing people old enough to work to provide evidence of very high incomes”. At the school library where the interview was taking place, a student overheard the dialogue I was having with the professor and intervened in the conversation: “I heard you talking about topics that interest me. I do not cross and these issues interest me. Please tell me about your work”. This was Leonardo Sánchez, who later became one of my most important informants. I interviewed him on a couple of occasions, and he told me about how he lost his passport, his life as a “non-crosser”, his plans for the future, and his views of Tijuana’s past (see Chapters 1 and 4).

Consumption reflects a trend towards a system of spatial exclusion which is based in part, on income and social class, but also on the “purity” of citizenship, that makes residents fully accountable to the State. Like any other postmodern consumer society, Tijuana’s society is a stratified one. Its members are indeed, divided according to a logic in which those “high up” and “low down” are plotted in a society of consumers where the differential is their degree of mobility, their freedom to choose where to be” (Bauman, 1998, p.86). The fact that it is so close to the border, and that it has a history where individuals moved at ease across national boundaries, makes it a place where the effects of State policy on such stratification is easier to see. Bodies here become an intrinsic part of the political field (Hasting and Wilson, 1999, p. 130). Instead of being bent into a single uniform mass, they are classified, separated and analyzed: Those “high up” are consumers, those “low down” laborers. “Nowhere is this more evident than at the edges of the state, where claims to sovereignty and aspirations to nationhood may be written on the body by practices designed to subject it to the authority that the State tries to enforce” (Hasting and Wilson, 1999, p.130). One of these practices is consumption. It illustrates that the growing barriers between north and south (Wonders, 2006) extend and multiply themselves among the peoples from both sides, the State acquiring growing powers to discern some from others in both north and south.

Yet, unlike the massive constructions that, fixed in the territory, physically divide San Diego and Tijuana, these boundaries are not static. They mutate constantly as people construct meaning of their differences, and their relation to space. Differences among southerners and locals, rich and poor, those allowed cross-border

movement, and those who are not ... They construct mental maps of the city where they live that are completely distinct from each other, they also have different consumption cultures. Marketers, for instance, are well aware of two consumption cultures that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter:

MM. But then, as a marketer, how do you visualize those different cultures generated among those who cross and those who don't? Do they share the same frames of reference?

AM. Yes they all live it.

MM. Even those who stay?

AM. Yes, because they can access it through the internet, television, radio stations...

MM. So how are they different then?

AM. They have a much more austere culture of consumption

MM. They spend less.

AM. They are more responsible less flexible.

MM. Why do you think is that?

AM. Prices. Over there you have the promotions, the sales, the two for the price of one and the Christmas sales, the Thanksgiving specials...

MM. Yes.

AM. Besides it is about quality. You get a shirt in Dorian's and pay almost 60 dollars, when in Las Americas it costs nineteen, the same freaking shirt...

MM. So those who do not go do not have access to cheap goods.

AM. Definitely.

This makes people construct different mental maps. Stationary consumers look south. This is the case of Irma Romero, a young girl who despite being born in Tijuana, still looks forward to her trips to Mexico City, in order to go shopping:

MM. Where does your mom buy her groceries?

IR. We go to *La Comercial*.

MM. Which one?

IR. Here in *Plaza Carrusel*¹¹.

MM. And where do you buy clothes?

¹¹ Plaza Carrusel is a large shopping center located in one of the nodes that connect Tijuana's old neighborhoods to the new areas in the southern part of the city (**See Map**). It has a Comercial Mexicana, as well as miscellaneous stores like *La Parisina* (fabric store), food establishments, and video clubs.

IR. When we go to Mexico.

MM. I see...and how often do you go to Mexico?

IR. I went twice this year.

MM. Do you fly?

IR. Only my mom and my little brother.

MM. And does she go often?

IR. Once a year...although now that my grandpa got sick she went there twice. My grandpa will now have surgery and she will go for three months and I also want to go there for a short while and work, make some money to go shopping.

MM. And where do you buy.

IR. In *Liverpool*, in Ciudad Satélite or *Fábricas de Francia* in *Peri Norte*¹².

MM: So here in the small shopping centers, in Tijuana, you do not go shopping.

IR: No, well I've been here for two and a half years so I went to Dorian's last time, but no, we do not buy here, we bring everything from there.

From my conversation with Irma, I noted that when she mentioned which stores she liked in Mexico City, she told me their exact location. Despite the fact that she had not been there in two and a half years, she could picture them in the map. She also was not exact in the amount of times she went to Mexico City. It almost seemed that she perceived a stronger linkage than the one she actually had, when she first told me she used to go once or twice a year, but then mentioned she had not traveled there for over two years. While Mexico City was omnipresent in her mind, a constant frame of reference, San Diego was almost non-existent, despite the fact that her father, a truck driver, went to "the other side" every week, while the family had no entry documents. This is not uncommon to find, as the boundaries between crossers and non-crossers permeate to families themselves. In those cases, it is the person who can

¹² *Ciudad Satélite* is a middle class neighborhood in Mexico City. *Fábricas de Francia* is a retail store that, along the lines of *Liverpool*, sells clothes, perfumes and furniture. *Perinorte* is a large shopping center in the north of Mexico City.

cross the border who is in charge of doing the shopping for the rest of the family. Leonardo's sister, for instance, was born in San Diego so even her family lost their documents more than a decade ago; she crosses the border every day to work at a famous retail store. Because she has the advantage of crossing the border while the rest of her family lacks entry documents, Leonardo's sister is responsible for providing the family with those items impossible to find in Tijuana. These relations constitute in part, some of the mechanisms *Tijuanenses* have found to bypass the material divide, as I will explain below.

5. Distributing Discrimination: Urban Growth, Gated Communities and the Housing Boom in Tijuana

When arriving in Tijuana by plane, one can see from the air, to the east and south, the new trends of urban expansion: enormous straps of territory that have been developed in symmetrical patterns, which give the land a sense of order and organization. Instead of the disorganized *colonias*, neighborhoods that gradually and chaotically worked their way through the years into obtaining basic services as they established themselves as part of the city, these constructions are the result of urban planning. They have basic services included, and they are meant to be urbanized areas, including schools, parks and other resources (See Figure 6).

This is not exclusive to Tijuana. In fact, these types of developments represent the most successful model in urban growth for the expansion of the peripheries in most Mexican cities (López Levy, 1999). These projects are carried out by construction firms that operate nationally, planting a similar aesthetic imprint and architectural styles throughout the country, in cities like Hermosillo, Cd. Juárez,

Chihuahua, Monterrey Guadalajara and Mexico City. In this, Tijuana is a leader: Between 1995 and 2000 the city showed a growth rate of 4.7 percent (Master Plan), as the population increased by 219,228 from 991,592 to 1,232,062. Of this expansion, 44 percent occurred due to migration. According to local planners, the city will grow by 200 per cent between 2007 and 2020 which explains the significant demand for housing. Indeed, a study commissioned in the early 2000s by the National Commission for Housing (CONAFOVI, for its Spanish acronym) positioned Baja California in second place nationally with regards to housing demand. This study reported that Tijuana would require 104 thousand new houses by 2008 (See *Encabeza Tijuana*). In response to this need, the State of Baja California obtained over one hundred thousand loans by *Infonavit*¹³ in 2006 and, by 2007, the plan contemplated the construction of over 24 thousand housing units, 8.7 percent more than in 2006.

The new housing developments have little resemblance with the irregular settlements that grew with a very strong physical and visual presence of the border. The aesthetics of these developments is different from that of the old houses that people brought in from “the other side” through the black door (See Chapter 1). These houses are built with cement, as opposed to wood, and even if some of the styles may copy or emulate elements of California style architecture, they are no different from the housing style that is built in the rest of Mexico. They materialize Mexican interpretations of such architectures, also adapted to Mexican materials and construction techniques. In these new cities, the urban landscape is very similar to

¹³ Infonavit is a state-owned leading Mexican mortgage lender which is responsible for financing most of the mortgage credits in the country.

that of Aguascalientes, Guadalajara or Querétaro, where developers are also building at a fast pace. And, even if some of these communities advertise themselves as being “close to the border”, they have visually blurred the United States to virtual inexistence.

In recent years, low income housing in Tijuana has been subject to controversy, because of the cuts in services, materials and space that developers are making in order to maximize their profit (See Escobar, 2005). Setting this controversy aside, it is worth pointing out that Tijuana’s new areas are showing an urban landscape that is more manageable than the old parts of the city. The lands that are being subject to these new developments are partitioned, distributed, and mapped. They are spatially organized, and therefore accounted for. Both visually and in organizational terms, this represents a modernization of the city, with a “cleaner” face, and adequate infrastructure. Indeed, these parts of Tijuana are undergoing “spatial modernization”, understood, among other things as “making the populated world hospitable for supra communal, state-ruled administration, and that task required as its necessary condition, making the world transparent and legible for administrative powers” (Bauman, 1998, p.33). According to Bauman, an urban space that is easy to fit in the cartographic grid makes both landscape and people easier to read. Certain marketing techniques that may not operate in the old *colonias*, are easier here to apply; and police will also be able to penetrate the paved and flat streets. Allocations, distributions and attributions will be easier to assign as the city becomes more legible for administrators, marketers and authorities. In Bauman’s words:

Monopoly is much easier to achieve if the map precedes the mapped territory: if the city is, from its creation and for its creation and for the duration of its entire history, simply a projection of the map upon the space, instead of desperately trying to capture the disorderly variety of urban reality in the impersonal 'elegance' of a cartographic grid. The map turns into a frame in which urban realities yet to arise are to be plotted, deriving their meaning and function solely from the site allocated to them within the grid (Bauman, 1998, p. 41).

As opposed to the landscape that I described in the first chapter of this dissertation, that among other things communicated a sense of abandonment, a lack of reach by the state, these new developments represent a way for the real estate market to conquer urban space (See López Levy, 2009). Accordingly, the image of these new areas suggests a strong presence of an administrative power, this time in the form of private investment and developers. Once space is mapped and placed in a cartographic grid, information about people living there is susceptible to be included in a data base. According to Bauman it is "the credit and marketing companies which are the main movers and users behind the database" (Bauman, 1998, p. 50). However, the database can also be used to control and monitor people's spatial attributions. In fact, it would not be the first times authorities are accused of sharing personal information about citizens with other sources. In 2006 the Electoral Federal Institute (IFE for its Spanish Acronym) denounced the improper use of electoral listings for private and commercial uses (Arcos, 2006). At the same time, people applying for visas in U.S. embassies and consulates have been asked about personal information that appears on treasury databases (related to their taxes), and such information is used as a criteria to deny or approve visa applications.

According to Manuel Castells, the city is to consumption what the factory is to production, and distinctions within housing could also be thought to correspond to segmented labor markets and job hierarchies (See quote in Fine and Leopold, 1993, p.251). In Tijuana, spatial segregation has historically been directly tied to consumption, since most businesses have concentrated in the downtown area, as a way to cater the higher demand posed by the most affluent sectors .“Only a small concentration of businesses offering only goods and services with a high consumption frequency and low unitary price exists in low-income neighborhoods” (Alegría, 2006, pp. 379). In terms of consumption patterns, people in poor areas are affected by the relatively high transportation price, and have little mobility. Recently, the large new shopping centers that I have mentioned (*Macropiazza, Mundo Divertido, Costco* and Home Depot) have been located in nodal points that connect the downtown to the new areas to the southeast of the city, so that they can be accessed both by residents living in the historic downtown or in these new developments (Alegría, 2006, p.192) (See Map 4). This may be due to the fact that, even if some of the new developments cater to low income residents, most of them host middle-income social sectors that have not made it around the areas of the rich ones (See Alegría, 2006, p.192.)

In addition to being more legible and manageable, the new housing developments represent a diversion of Tijuana’s traditional arrangements where it is not uncommon to see a luxurious residence next to a poor shack, making it nearly impossible to have a socially exclusive neighborhood that would facilitate the work of marketers like Don Horacio Ramos. In most of these traditional areas, different sequences of layered events and historic accidents had shaped houses, streets and

roads in a way that made social and economic homogeneity virtually impossible (Alegría, 2006, p.269). In opposition to this, spatial segregation between higher and lower income residents has become more pervasive in the periphery, since “the legal peripheral new settlements have been lead by private (...) big housing investments comprised of similarly priced housing with people of similar incomes” (Alegría, 2006, p.353.)

It is not the focus of this dissertation to provide empirical evidence about the correlation between social and spatial segregation in Tijuana. More research needs to be done in that direction. However, the advertising wave of the new housing developments can provide us interesting information about the new trends of spatial segregation in the city. Like in other parts of the world, these type of urban developments are reproducing in response to a combination of “fear and marketing” (López Levy, 2009, p.6), as a result of which isolation is both being promoted and consumed, based on the search of status, quality of life and security. Advertising constructs worlds where “the sky is more blue and the grass greener: utopias” (López Levy, 2009, p.6). As a part of their marketing strategy, each of these developments had a theme, a slogan and an image, that appeared in local media and as in gigantic billboards all over the city. Some of these ads were very transparent in the way they conveyed social difference, status and prestige, as they catered to different sectors of the population.

Espacio 5, for instance, is a development of townhouses located to the north of upscale and prestigious *Colonia Chapultepec*, very popular among sophisticated high income young couples, with a cosmopolitan taste (See Figure 7). This development is

located on the top of a hill, so the ads' slogan reads "*Un espacio para los que estamos arriba*". It portrays a group of *yuppies* having a party at a fancy terrace with a view of the city, making it obvious that "arriba" here is not only related to the city's topography, but also it's social pyramid. The prestige of certain upscale neighborhoods is exploited both in the names and the publicity of middle class developments that happened to be in the area. This is the case of *Colinas de Chapultepec* (Chapultepec Hills), a middle and upper middle class development with single family homes, a club house with a pool, tennis courts and a reception hall, that mostly cater, according to one of the vendors, to "maquiladora managers and people who work on the 'other side'". The other one is *Cumbres de la Cacho* (Peaks of Cacho), a very similar development with larger residences, that openly exploits the prestige of *Colonia Cacho*, one of the best established neighborhoods in town, with a slogan that makes reference to a high standard of living in "one of Tijuana's best zones" (See Map 7).

For the aspirational middle class, *Urbiquinta Versalles* caters to desires of opulence and inclusion in what traditional Mexican elitism calls "*gente bien*", with the picture of a little girl, dressed in pink with a matching bow that says: *Soy tan bonita que vivo en Urbiquinta Versalles. Solo para gente bien. Y tu ¿ donde vives?* (I am so pretty that I live in *Urbiquinta Versalles*, only for well off people. And where do you live?) (See Figure 5). Similar developments, like *Rincón Toscano* has the picture of lined up houses with a tuscan-like architectural style, with a slogan that says "*Vive a tu nivel porque vivir bien aquí tiene sentido*" (live at your level because here, it makes sense to live well". *Rincón Toscano* offers, among other things, "a panoramic view, 2

car garage, exclusive gated community with 42 residences, controlled access, enclosing fence, security 24 hours a day. In here, “living well” is associated also with the notion of “level”, which in Mexico has all to do with social position, prestige, and class.

Other developments, that obviously cater to people with lower incomes, sometimes emphasize their accessibility and the possibility to finance them, like the case of *Real de San Francisco*, located near *Blvd. 2000*, which connects the south of the city with Rosarito and the highway to Ensenada (See Map 6). More than a slogan, this ad shows bullets that make this residential option attractive: “We have the best financing schemes. Everybody qualifies!”, and a small vignette that says: “the best quality of life: security, green areas, shopping areas, sports areas”. They advertise that *Comercial Mexicana* and *Cinépolis* will soon establish themselves in the surroundings. Aside from quality of life, what this particular development advertises here is the proximity of a shopping area, and a movie theater. It advertises connectivity, in the form of Mexican nationally established franchises. Residents here will have access to these establishments where they will buy products and brands that circulate nationally. They will therefore share the narratives and frames of reference about these products with people who live in Michoacán, Guadalajara or Mexico City. Another similar development, for a comparable market niche was *Terrazas de la Presa*, which I saw advertised around the city in both gigantic billboards and on the rooftops of taxis. The slogan said: “*Desarrollos hay muchos. Como Terrazas de la Presa ninguno*” (there are many developments, but no one like *Terrazas de la Presa*)” The ads in this case, emphasized the “uniqueness” of this particular development,

without specifying what it made it so unique, aside from the picture of a home, right next to the slogan.

In recent years, as a result of the waves of violence that have affected the city, security has become an issue that has permeated housing marketing. They translate utopias into slogans like “*Habitar es tranquilidad. Urbiquinta del Cedro*” (to inhabit is peace of mind). These “fortified enclaves”, as Teresa Caldeira called them in her study about Sao Paulo (see Caldeira, 1996) “generate a dynamic of intolerance, exclusion and segregation” (López Levy, 2008, p. 7). Like in the rest of the city, boundaries here are not only physical, but also in terms of language, habits (including shopping habits), physical appearance and clothes (López Levy, 2008, p.7). In Tijuana, these fortified enclaves are not exclusive to the rich, since there is enough, as advertising tell us, for all segments of society. Aside from the undeniable advantage of offering all social groups the possibility to own a house (some of them even start at ten thousand dollars), this model of urban growth has the capacity of spatially distributing residents in different enclaves, all fortified, separated from each other, accounted for and classified.

In the very same fashion that the divisions between north and south have been exacerbated by fences, cameras, and barricades, I argue in this last section that similar borders are also emerging in the new parts of Tijuana. They divide peoples of different income brackets, and position them in separate spaces, that are, both physically and symbolically, divided by fences. Among the new gated communities that we see at the border now, the biggest and tougher to access is, by far, San Diego, but there are many others, of different sizes, that separate and classify people according to established

standards of access and spatial attributions, some of which (the ones related to consumption) we have discussed in this dissertation. If it is true we cannot predict the future, one thing we know and it is that this new city, or better said, these new cities, are fading away the old memories of *Parque Teniente Guerrero*, the city's traditional public plaza where the people from Tijuana, rich and poor, young and old, would gather on Independence Day to cry at unison Viva México! Right before starting the big *fiesta*...

6. Skirting the Material Divide: Social Networks, P.O. Boxes and the Technological Bypass

After lunch, Laureana and I moved from the dining room to the *papelería*, where she has a computer. While clients started dropping by we started browsing for products she could find to sell without having to cross the border. Now that she cannot wander around the warehouses in San Ysidro and Otay, her young customers are showing up less frequently at her business, even though it is conveniently located right across the street from a middle school. I noticed some “local” lines of products, like *Fulanitos*. *Fulanitos* mugs, pillows, backpacks and bracelets are in high demand among middle school girls and are frequently found in *papelerías* and gift stores around the country. In a world overtaken by Hello Kitty, *Fulanitos*, is a small reminder that globalization has not gone as far as to sweep the totality of local graphic initiatives. Inspired by our conversation, Laureana got online and started searching for “Distroller.com” (See Chapter 4). On their website there is an edgy cartoon of an Aztec warrior that pulls a map of Mexico out of his mouth. We were happy to see that Baja California is among the states where “Distroller” recently established a store. We

clicked and found it in a local shopping center. We planned for a visit. This is, we said, a small window of opportunity for business that does not come from the north; however, the prices were astonishingly high.

Like many others, Laureana is finding ways where she can bypass the physical restrictions to movement in a heavily interdependent binational region. Having lived at the border her whole life, she is exploring other frames of reference, brands, stores, and products that she now can have, given her new reality. She is also finding mechanisms through which she can still access those products from her computer desk at home, in Tijuana. Still, she is not happy with the situation. “No es vida” (this is not life), she says. Her professional background makes Tijuana’s already limited offers remarkably insufficient for her expectations and taste: “Think about it. Instead of going to a cool exhibition in Balboa Park, I now have only CECUT¹⁴, instead of the beautiful parks in Coronado what do I have here? *Parque Morelos*?¹⁵”. In a world of access, Laureana is for the moment placed at a serious disadvantage, excluded from the circuit of those who had access to Balboa Park, and enjoyed a San Diegan beach. Until very recently, she took it for granted:

The people of the twenty-first century are likely to see themselves as nodes in embedded networks of shared interests as they are to perceive themselves as autonomous agents in a Darwinian world of competitive survival. For them, personal freedom has less to do with the right of possession and the ability to exclude others, and more to do so with the right to be included in webs of mutual relationships. They are the first generation of the Age of Access (Laid, 2005, p.13.)

¹⁴ Tijuana Cultural Center (CECUT), Please see Chapter 2.

¹⁵ Parque Morelos was inaugurated in 1987, as part of an effort to supply recreational public spaces to the city. It is a popular destination, particularly on the weekends where the park offers free events.

In this scenario, the rules of exclusion and access revolve around categories of the past, but also some new ones. In the local dimension of San Diego and Tijuana, they are increasingly related to space, mobility and what I have called here the spatial attributions that are given to individuals by an increasingly territorially strong State, through the mechanisms I explained in my third chapter. But how do people cope, negotiate and bypass such limitations? During my stay in Tijuana I found that, in the realm of consumption, people are constantly searching for tools to bypass the material divide that impedes their access to stores and products they crave from the “other side”. The two more visible mechanisms are, by far, reliance on social networks and the use of technology.

“When I was able to go across”, says Leonardo Sánchez, “I bought my clothes in Fashion Valley, National City, Horton Plaza. I cannot go to those places now so I ask my cousin: bring me clothes, bring me this and that”. Indeed, people rely on family, friends and smugglers, as well as technological devices to bridge restrictions to physical mobility. Those in the family who can cross the border are in charge of supplying the rest. Communication technologies, like computers and cell phones, are very important in this process, since people can locate the product they want on the web, and then communicate with their relatives on the “other side” using a Nextel radio, which for a monthly fee allows people to exchange an unlimited number of calls across the border. Leonardo is saving money to purchase a refrigeration system that will allow him to set up a mobile ice cream parlor. He searches for coolers and refrigerators online, and then asks a relative to go to the store in San Diego to complete the transaction. If they have questions about the model or the power of the

machines, they can call him on his Nextel and he will talk directly to the vendor about the price, while the relative acts as a facilitator:

LS: My business will be selling ice cream. It is going to be based on franchises. There is similar stuff on the other side. I remember when we were children; we heard the sound and we would go outside to buy ice cream. There is not such a thing in Tijuana. I will mix our own local *nieve de garrafa* with the U.S. style. I will mix many chocolate flavors. I will start with carts and then with small stores, for people to eat there.

MM: You talk a lot about stuff that happens on the other side, but you haven't been there in a long time. You know because you remember, or because of what you hear from people?

LS: My whole family comes and goes. It is like if I go, because this clothes, they just brought them for me...My cousins from Arizona are here, my uncles...and my girlfriend goes to the "other side". I recently bought a new battery for my car. I tell them, bring this, bring that. We talk on the Nextel and if there is a problem they call me. They all speak Spanish now and I speak English.

MM. How is it for you emotionally? This is a place upon which you depend, but you can't go. You depend on other people to obtain what comes from there. But by now it has been a long time since you don't go, do you still remember? Or do you just imagine how things are on that side?

LS: They bring pictures. And it is still like I remember it. I used to hang out a lot in El Cajón, which is not that close. I remember that society, that community and I assume the majority is like that. It is just that now they tell me that they do not speak English in San Ysidro, that the majority speak Spanish. I did not experience that. In my times, you were *really* a foreigner, everybody spoke English. You did notice a difference, you had to speak English. This was in the eighties, early nineties...

According to a 2002 survey, 31 percent of the total households in Tijuana were planning to purchase a personal computer (Meneses and Associates, 2002).

Interestingly, 23 percent of the interviewees who planned to make the purchase were men and 41 percent women, which are traditionally in charge of shopping. In terms of cell phones, cell phone use has increased in the city, as was perceived by Mr.

Cervantez-Pérez, the college professor I interviewed, about his students: "They are

finding more and more difficulties to cross the border. But you see they have an incredible access to technology; you see them with their cells, their blackberries, something that was unseen a few years ago”. And cell phones, as well as digital cameras can be put to use in very creative ways (like the example I mentioned about the lady who used her camera to photograph clothes at a San Diego store for her maid in Tijuana to choose). And for those who cannot afford a personal computer there are also internet cafes. During research I conducted in marginal areas in Tijuana, I was struck by the relative abundance of such spaces, particularly in the surroundings of schools. In poor *colonias* where public life is limited to hanging out in the dusty unpaved streets, internet cafes are becoming crucial points of connectivity, not only among neighbors but also with places, like the “other side”, that are out of reach.

In Cervantes Pérez’s words:

CP. These kids speak English, and they buy their products in *segundas*, or in *sobreruedas*. There weren’t that many before but they have proliferated after the eighties.

MM. And not only clothes right? Also produce, dairy and other type of merchandise?

CP. Forty percent of used stuff. Also new stuff.

MM. Smuggling?

CP. Not necessarily. Also discarded stuff. American companies that sell second hand and here you see people very well dressed...with second hand clothes.

MM. So, your kids, you do not distinguish who can cross or who can’t by their clothes.

CP. No, because of the *segundas*. And even electronics are so expensive here, cell phones and radios are expensive, but they still have them.

MM. Do you ask them if they can cross the border?

CP. They wish to go. If you ask them, why can’t you cross, they reply “they did not “accept” me¹⁶, I have no income, my parents don’t have

¹⁶ Interestingly, the term use here is *aceptar*, admit, as if they have been not offered admission at a school, or a social circle.

the income, it is a consequence of the population boom here in Baja California, people who come here with the desire of going to the “other side”, but they stay, there are jobs here...

MM. But do you feel this is an issue that is present in their lives?

CP. They want to go. They don't give up. Almost all of them drive, and some work, and some work on the other side.

MM. What do they do?

CP. They sell in the Swap Meet or work in fast food restaurants.

MM. With no papers?

CP. Many of them are born there. They study here because education is cheaper, but work there because they are citizens or have green cards. Some have relatives on the other side and they leave as soon as they can.

MM. They leave.

CP. It is not so easy to determine. I sometimes ask them, raise your hand if you have a “passport”, and consistently around 40 percent raise a hand. Most of them do not have one.

MM. And before?

CP. Almost everybody had it before.

Although it is not the focus of this dissertation, it is important to mention the fact that, in the same way that the ability to cross the border position mobile consumers at a material advantageous position regarding stationary consumers, there are all sorts of power relations developed within families depending on the spatial attributions of their members. Family members who can indeed cross the border face the pressure of having to buy for the rest of the family, as well as to do the necessary errands for the household. Although I did not directly inquire how this affects their relationships with siblings, parents or children, I did note that such relations are not always smooth. Like I mentioned before, Irma Romero's father can indeed cross the border, while the rest of his family does not have a visa.

MM. So right now it is only your dad who comes and goes.

IR. Only him.

MM. So the rest of the family does not go, so toys and all those things, if you don't want to buy them in Mexico City, you buy them here?

IR. Yes.

MM. Or he brings them from there?

IR. No he does not bring toys, unless I need something for school, I tell him what I need, I first research the prices and depending on where it is cheaper he tells me buy it here or “wait for me, I’ll bring it”.

Sometimes I lose my patience because I ask and he does not bring me the stuff, and I need it and he does not bring it. So I want it (the visa), just to be able to go get them myself, but I feel they will take a long time to give it to me, and besides it is very difficult to get it, more the visa, I imagine, the passport would be easy, but the visa, this is what is important.

MM. Passport would not be a problem.

IR. So just the visa. He brought stuff for me not long ago, he crossed and called me and asked me if I did not need anything, when he has time...

Irma was not happy with her dependence on her father to obtain some stuff she needed for school. She would have preferred to be able to obtain it herself, but because of her lack of mobility, she needed to be patient and wait until her dad “had time”.

This made me think about the types of complex, silent power struggles that must take place in the intimate sphere of a household, that revolve around the mobility of some and the immobility of others. At the same time, I noticed during our conversation the lack of knowledge that prevails among many *Tijuanenses* about the types of documents needed to cross the border. One more time I confirmed the confusion between the visa and the passport, as if the possibility to exit the country was in fact translated into the ability of entering another, which at the border is the same thing.

Not only stationary consumers attempt to bypass the material restrictions to cross border mobility. With wait times to cross the border becoming unmanageable, people are finding more and more ways to buy the products they need or crave, and stay. A close friend, who was new in Tijuana, for instance, mentioned to me she was surprised when a neighbor suggested her that she buy her children Halloween

costumes online. “I am new in this, I did not know”, she said to me, “I did not know there were other options”. In informal surveys I conducted at local shopping centers, I asked people if they had a visa and the reason for their shopping trip. Many did say that, although they had a passport, they were checking a store out to see if they could save themselves a trip to the “other side”. This is not unknown by local marketers, and particularly on the radio, it was not uncommon to hear advertising of local stores or shopping centers that started with “Ahórrrese la línea...” (save yourself the line). Recently, with the gradual depreciation of the peso versus the dollar, people are also thinking twice about shopping trips to San Diego. Even the upper middle class is finding designer brands that in the past they bought in Horton Plaza or Fashion valley, at local swap meets. At the same time, during my inquiries at local stores, I found a lot of people who, having entry documents to the United States, were accompanying a relative or friend who did not. “*Me trajo mi novio que no tiene pasaporte*” (I came with my boyfriend who does not have a passport) was an answer I regularly heard, in this case.

And both for mobile and stationary consumers, there is a vast array of technologies and institutions that connect them with U.S. spaces, products and other instances of the public sphere, like magazines and newspapers, without having to move. I previously mentioned the importance of the P.O. Box, that many *Tijuanenses* have in San Ysidro, Chula Vista and other nearby locations. People receive in these P.O. boxes all sorts of materials that keep them connected with networks in the United States: magazines, coupons, and products. Some services are as sophisticated as to transport the packages all the way to coffee shops in Tijuana, where for a fee,

customers can pick their mail without the hassle of crossing the border. With this system, I was able, from San Diego, to send birthday party invitations and gifts to people living in Tijuana, paying postage to a local address. In terms of staying connected to the “other side”, P.O. boxes are of utmost importance, as much as a driver’s license or a social security number. In many people’s minds, there is no difference between these documents, and more than once, I heard comments like “No I do not have a social security number. I have a P.O. Box, but I do not have a social security number”.

During my stay in Tijuana, I constantly asked myself if the differences between border crossers and people without a visa were in fact relevant. What difference does it make, after all, when a person buys a product on this side of the border, if it was manufactured in China? What difference does it make to buy the same item at the Walmart store in Chula Vista or Walmart Tijuana? Even if, as an academic, I see a relevance in terms of the trajectory of each product, the types of laws their manufacture and distribution dealt with, the relationship established with the nation-state by those who consume it, and so on, I initially asked myself, how relevant are these differences, really, in terms of the everyday life of *Tijuanenses*. Do they really matter? The differences are indeed very subtle, unspoken and almost invisible in Tijuana’s social landscape. However, once we think of them in terms of the relationship every individual establishes with space, we are then able to unfold a vast array of material asymmetries, power relations and patterns of exclusion that are very present in the way people relate to each other, even if they are not evident. We are then able to see, in the everyday practice of consumption, some of the immaterial

differences physical barriers between San Diego and Tijuana are establishing among *Tijuanenses* themselves, as a consequence of the territorial manifestations of State power that go well beyond the placing of fences and barricades.

The cost of this for those who experience such power in their everyday life has so far been unspoken of in academic and journalistic circles, where attention tends to focus on those individuals who can actually cross the border. These people indeed represent the human component that connects rather than separates the two countries. Even though I have discussed the issue in this dissertation, further studies are needed to actually assess how this population experiences the policies of a government that is not even theirs. Territoriality beyond borders is therefore a process that needs to be researched not only in terms of its immediate impact on trade and economic activity, but also regarding the ways it affects disenfranchised populations like the one I have chosen for this dissertation. Studies on how people in Tijuana who cannot cross the border construct, depend and imagine spaces that are banned for them, and the way in which they interpret the infrastructures created (both physical and virtual) that sustain such exclusion, are much needed if we want to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the global barricading of the west that scholars are addressing in their writing¹⁷.

¹⁷ See See Nevins 2000 and 2002, and See Andreas 2000.

7. Conclusions

In this chapter I discussed some of the ways in which the physical barriers that divide San Diego and Tijuana have changed the ways in which borderlanders accommodate to space in their everyday lives. I explain how the territorialization and enforcement of the border have produced boundaries, not only between north and south, but also among Tijuana residents, some of which feed into already existing divisions around income, class and ethnicity, with the new component of cross-border mobility. As a result, Tijuana residents are torn by opposing forces of openness and closure, where free trade coexists with growing restrictions for the movement of people, and also by clear contradictions between access to information and global media messages that reach a physically constrained local audience.

Mexico's pop star Julieta Venegas, who was born and raised in Tijuana, declared once in an interview her views about *being* from Tijuana: "In Tijuana, you know you are a Mexican because your parents are Mexican, because you attend a Mexican school and because your friends speak the same language, because we think of everything in terms of Mexico. However, in our everyday lives, we are closer to the United States: we go to the movies in Chula Vista, we go to concerts, everything on that side..." (Chaidez, 2006, p.11). Here, Venegas constructs a place where belonging to an imaginary community is not necessarily matched by practices of everyday life. It also implies, as I described in my first chapter, a unique connection with the State that can manifest in a very pragmatic exercise of citizenship, which ultimately translates in a condition of hybridity and transnationalism (see Chapter 1). However, as I have discussed in this dissertation, Venegas' Tijuana is a place where not everybody in the

city belongs. In this chapter, I have exposed some clues to decipher, at least in part, the logic behind the differences, between those who do and those who do not have access to that way of life.

I have argued in this chapter that a radically different Tijuana is establishing itself, formed by people who live their lives completely unaware (and on occasions uninterested) of what happens on the other side of the fence they can see every day, on the northern end of town. But how do these two cities interact? What kinds of relationships are established between their members? How do they operate socially and spatially in the life of the city? There is still research to be done to answer these questions. However, I hope I have offered, in this chapter, useful elements to address this discussion, by focusing on the ways consumption practices, markets and landscapes produce and reflect both real and virtual checkpoints in Tijuana's everyday life. Based on two and a half years of field work I argued, in this dissertation, that this process can be attributed to a wider and more comprehensive system of social and spatial control which manifests in the way Tijuana residents organize their everyday life, social relations and even (as I discuss towards the end of this chapter) spatial distribution.

Accordingly, I believe that the contradictory convergence between virtual fluidity and material barriers that is reflected in Tijuana's *mediascapes*, is emplaced in an exclusionary regime that favors the mobility of certain residents, at the time it anchors others in a "territorial trap" (Agnew quoted by Paasi, 1999, p. 70). In this chapter, I have explained how material checkpoints translate into virtual checkpoints, and vice versa: How social and cultural differences materialize themselves into spatial

segregation. This dialectic relationship both substantiates and enhances the enormous weight of the Nation-state's territorial power in the region, which ultimately determines the dynamics of cross border mobility, to which border residents have no choice but to adapt and accept. Here, Tijuana's experience shows that boundaries are not mere lines on the ground, but manifestations of social practice and discourse (Paasi, 1999, p.70), nurtured by physical barriers and restrictions to cross-national mobility, at the time that they foster the construction of new walls, virtual checkpoints, that separate people and partition the landscape within each of our two neighboring nations.

TABLES

Table 12. Population with a Visa in Baja California, According to Level of Income

Levels of Income (by multiples of minimum wage, m.w.)	Proportion of sample households that spend in dollars	Percentage of people with a visa in relation to total	Estimated weekly spending in dollars for Baja California (in pesos)
Up to one m.w.	8936	1.7	502627.5
From 1 to 2 m.w.	20066	5.4	662 191.2
From 2 to 3 m.w.	25191	5.8	1 190 788.0
From 3 to 5 m.w.	65449	13.1	3 083 938.0
More than 5	219134	74.0	22 483 138.1
Total	334359	100	27 922 682.9

Source: School of Economics, University of Baja California, September, 2001.

Table 13. Media through which Tijuana Consumers Learn about Products Sold in the United States

	Primary Media	Secondary Media
Television	32.0	30.0
Radio	6.2	29.1
Newspapers and Magazines	22.1	14.1
Catalogs, coupons and fliers	26.4	18.1
Family	1.1	3.5
Friends	2.1	1.3
The place of consumption	8.7	2.2
Neighbors	.9	2.2
Others	.7	00
Total	100	100

Source: School of Economics, University of Baja California, September, 2001.

Table 14. Border Crossing Statistics San Ysidro
and Otay Ports of Entry (1997-2007)

	San Ysidro		Otay		
	Personal Vehicles	Pedestrians	Personal Vehicles	Pedestrians	Trucks
1997	13,213,420	7,046,923	3,377,407	619,158	567,715
1998	14,474,686	6,909,382	3,800,936	684,047	606,384
1999	15,269,561	7,558,174	4,326,786	648,756	646,587
2000	15,237,428	7,542,450	4,480,026	1,002,971	688,340
2001	15,001,616	11,435,946	4,845,348	1,684,117	708,446
2002	16,441,766	7,903,483	3,956,842	1,467,171	731,291
2003	17,408,481	8,302,110	4,140,610	1,519,627	697,152
2004	17,621,030	9,457,600	4,912,899	1,496,196	726,164
2005	17,208,106	8,156,350	6,193,568	1,385,134	730,253
2006	17,135,163	7,811,614	6,672,994	1,410,927	749,472
2007	15,696,262	7,756,569	5,661,794	4,616,308	738,765
Increase 1997-2007	18.8 %	10.07 %	67.63 %	645.5783 %	30.1%

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation

CONCLUSIONS

The title of this dissertation starts with the words enforcing boundaries. With them, I refer to a process that started in Tijuana when the border was established in 1848. Since then, both Mexico and the United States have used their resources and capabilities to establish a clear separation between two sides of a line that was arbitrarily drawn on the map, as a result of a war. This is not surprising, since the definition of material borders constitutes an intrinsic element of nation-building, and boundaries have become important symbolic tools to make this possible. Different from borders, boundaries are invisible lines that are manufactured by human cultures. Their production is linked with “the social and spatial division of labor, the control of resources and social differentiation” (Paasi, 2003, p.81). Scholars have become interested in how they are used in the construction of communities, territorial identities and representations of “us” and “the other”, in the search of “culturally homogeneous territorial groups” (Paasi, 2003, p.466). This has been quite a titanic task at the U.S.-Mexico border, a vast region that for decades remained out of the reach of governmental control. This is a land where communities from both sides have lived throughout decades in close interdependence with each other, maintaining family, economic and cultural ties that kept blurring divisions and differences.

The imperative of securing territorial control of the border has not become evident at the same time, or in the same form for the case of the two nations. We could say in fact that while Mexico became more interested in territoriality in the era of nationalism that prevailed internationally during most of the XX Century, the United

States started taking it more seriously with globalization, when forces of economic integration were expected to erode the relevance of the nation-state. In any case, the history of Tijuana is a story of how both States have sought to homogenize their own side of the border with the rest of their national territory. This has been done differently by the two governments, mostly as a function of power asymmetries, material capabilities and economic priorities. So while Mexico's territoriality has been manifested more in the realms of economics and culture, the United States has asserted territoriality with a clear intervention on the land, and the construction of physical, virtual and legal infrastructures that regulate and restrict cross-border movement. I have called this *territoriality beyond borders*, considering it has deep effects on both sides of the international divide. And, understanding territoriality as a form of power that moves beyond material infrastructures into the realm of meaning, I made in my dissertation three primordial arguments about how State territoriality manifests in landscapes of consumption at the Tijuana-San Diego border, which refer to the second part of my title: Globalization and State power.

First, I argued there is a process of *mexicanization* of the border in the particular case of a city that has become iconic of the opposite, a symbol of global trends of transnational interaction, and the disappearance of borders. Second, the *territorialization* of the border, manifested in this case in the growing territorial power of the State, in a global context where its importance has been seriously questioned and discussed by scholars across the social sciences. Third, the *multiplication of borders* and boundaries, and the dialectical relation among them, not only between north and south, but also within the city of Tijuana, which is significant as both

scholars and policy makers attempt to understand new divisions in the international arena, and the role of cities in the world. The mexicanization of the border is a process that most scholars have disregarded, since the globalization fever of the 1990s exclusively directed attention to the borderization of Mexico. I argued in my dissertation that this perspective is incomplete. By looking at the local effects of globalization, I concluded this is a process that goes both ways. Yes the nation has established closer contact with its borders, but borders also become strongly connected to the nation. This happens primarily because the State has increased its presence at the U.S.-Mexico border, imposing its priorities of territorial control, and the sets of meanings that come with them. As a result, space and territory have become more important at the borderlands. They play a more determinant role in the way local residents conduct their everyday life. This is why I talk about the territorialization of the border. Finally, I also argue in this dissertation that the divisions established by national governments at the border are multiplying as a result of this process, both materially and symbolically. Borders and boundaries are becoming more prevalent, not only in the separation between the two national communities, but also among different groups within them. Here, I point out there is a dialectic relationship between borders and boundaries, which produce and enforce each other. As differences between the two sides become more established, we can also see the border landscape increasingly partitioned by fences, not only at the international divide, but also within the city of Tijuana itself. This in turn produces other boundaries among border residents, differences between rich and poor, mobiles and immobiles, laborers and consumers.

This brings me to talk about the last part of my title: The geography of cross-border consumption. In my dissertation, I have used the study of consumption as a lens to observe, concretely, the actual ways in which the State's territorial power has affected the everyday lives of borderlanders. Consumption is a practice of everyday life with the power of reconciling both the material and the symbolic, by illustrating peoples' connections with infrastructures and markets, as well as narratives, identities and memories. Consuming builds relationships between clients and vendors, owners and products, patrons and stores. It also establishes economic, political and social connections between consumers and markets, citizens and States, local environments and global spheres. Therefore, studying consumption in Tijuana has provided me with a tremendously effective mechanism to observe how policies of territorial control reorganize the ways in which Tijuana residents connect to the nation, the global economy and the other side of the border, as well as the relations established among each other and with the space where they live.

In chapter 1 argued that the economic and geographical distance that separated Tijuana from the rest of Mexico, as well as a relatively permeable border, favored the habit of consuming in San Diego on a regular basis. This led to a consumer culture that tied Tijuana residents to the consumer revolution in United States. The constant coming and going across borders was accompanied with a sense of abandonment by Mexico's State institutions and infrastructures. People living in Tijuana also shared with those from across the border patterns of desire and frames of reference that were uncommon in the rest of Mexico. Some people got used to choosing among the advantages offered by two different economies, and two separate social contracts. In

other words, they established a unique connection to the nation-state, characterized by an “impure” exercise of citizenship, and a selective sense of membership. In this context, *Tijuanenses* built social relations among themselves and with “the other side” that socially and visually reflected a condition where transnational mobility was not necessarily a privilege. Many people shared a common experiences of crossing the border on a daily basis, as well as a similar material culture. Identity therefore revolved around locality, where despite their undeniable “Mexicanness”, those raised in Tijuana tended to share attributes that reflected a long distance with the rest of the country. This is how they distinguished themselves from people from other parts of Mexico. It is in this context that we can understand the identity of hybrids, people who are not from here, not from there, but from both sides despite what their paperwork may say. They represent an open challenge for a State policy that has set as a priority to establish clear differences between the two sides of the border.

In chapter 2, I described the most visible manifestations of State territoriality for the case of Mexico. Once the land was partitioned by the physical border, I explain Mexico’s efforts to make it present in the minds of local residents from both sides. Indeed, it took some time to make the new political map also become a part of the mental map of *Tijuanenses*. Motivated by the fear of losing the entire Baja California Peninsula to U.S. expansionism, the establishment of Tijuana’s customs office and the closure of the casino are examples of the efforts to secure Mexico’s presence and control of a territory that was clearly beyond administrative reach. The territorial integration of the border became important for a post-revolutionary government that faced the challenge of pacifying and unifying the country. Economic

policy became a tool in this project, as is mostly evident during the industrialization push of the sixties and seventies. During those years, authorities took a series of measures that aimed to connect consumption in Tijuana with production hubs in the rest of Mexico. However, the city's market remained an exception to centrally planned economic trends, although it did respond to adjustments in the exchange rate. Targeted industrial plans (like those that included *maquiladoras*) allowed for a highly competitive economy that turned Tijuana into a population magnet. People coming from other parts of Mexico strengthened the bonds between this remote city and the Mexican mainland. These bonds were visually enforced with urban planning that aimed to homogenize its image with that of Mexico City. Throughout the decades, the government also made investments in infrastructure (highways, train tracks, electrical plants and so on) to integrate Tijuana into Mexico's infrastructural network. These policies played a role in reorganizing the consumption habits of its population. They gradually modified people's patterns of connectivity with the national network and how they relate to space, as the nation's infrastructural, institutional and cultural grid became more present in their minds and everyday lives.

In chapter 3, I engaged with U.S. policies of territorial control. I discussed how, through the establishment of a selective border, the U.S. government has been able to accommodate its need to secure territorial control with that of facilitating a transnational economy. In this chapter, I described a tremendously powerful State, with incalculable reach over the lives of border residents. Its weight extends from the physical control of space to much more: the regulation of people's mobility, the management and spatial distribution of private individuals and the imposition of

meanings and identities. I argued in this chapter that this ultimately translates into a system of exclusion becoming more prevalent in the border region. This system establishes differences among people according to their possibility of moving across borders, which is intrinsically tied with their ability to perform as consumers. I described the importance of technology in imposing a disciplinary regime that operates through the identification, classification, and surveillance of people. Indeed, the establishment of a *border Panopticon* makes it easier for border administrators to clarify differences within a population that have historically proved to be hard to discern. Hybrid identities are then gradually succumbing to what I called the purification of citizenship, which attaches people to either of the two nations. All this constituted what may be called a set of physical, legal and virtual infrastructures, both visible and invisible, that give shape to the State's material and symbolic architecture of power at the border region. I argued in this chapter that the re-mapping of space at the border which accompanies these policies entails a reorganization of national and transnational connectivities in Tijuana, enforcing old boundaries and creating new ones.

Chapter 4 moved the focus toward the landscape of consumption. Based on two and a half years of ethnographic fieldwork at the border, I reported on the spatial organization of shopping in the Tijuana-San Diego border. I conducted fieldwork in malls, supermarkets, small businesses, open air markets, transnational franchises, and second hand stores. I explained how these spaces nourish and represent differentiated practices of consumption among local residents, from the upper end shopping malls in San Diego, to swap meets and *sobreruedas*. These places represent differentiated

points of entry to the global economy, offering diverse types of connections with global, national and local markets. The meanings local residents attach to these differences inform us on the boundaries being created and reinforced in Tijuana's society. San Diego stores offer Tijuana consumers unmediated connectivity with American markets, and access to goods beyond many of the restrictions imposed by customs and import laws, nationally imposed quality standards and so on. Meanwhile, people buying in Tijuana establish patterns of connectivity with the global economy that are mediated by the Mexican State. In the realm of consumption, these differences reflect the systems of exclusion that I described in chapter 3. The wide range of consumption sites in the region reflect differentiated modalities of access, nesting different cultures of consumption as well as identities. In Tijuana, they reflect the spatial attributions that are conferred on local residents by a foreign state, which inform us on how territoriality beyond borders concretely operates. They also project people's relation to space because space becomes the vehicle to mark boundaries among people. The power of two nation-states becomes visible here because it prompts people to redraw the boundaries of their own consumption practices, and the sets of connections and meanings that come with them, to make them fit into national territories.

Finally, chapter 5 discussed the ways in which physical barriers have changed everyday life in Tijuana, with regards to consumption. The different situations I describe in this chapter reflect the proliferation of boundaries, not only between north and south, but also among Tijuana residents. Some of these boundaries feed into already existing divisions around income, class and ethnicity, with the new component

of cross-border mobility. As a result, Tijuana residents are torn by opposing forces of openness and closure, where free trade coexists with growing restrictions for the movement of people. They also experience, in their everyday life, clear contradictions between access to information and global media messages that reach a physically constrained local audience. In this chapter, I described how these divisions reorganize social relations in the city, by establishing subtle yet powerful boundaries between those who can move across the border and those who cannot. Such differences manifest in material and economic advantages for mobile consumers. However, in order to do so, they have to fit in a classification system designed by the U.S. government. This system leaves out people whose incomes and status impairs their condition as consumers or who do not comply with the requirements of “purity” established by legal standards of belonging. As this is difficult to do in a region where transnationalism and interdependence has historical roots, the proportion of local residents who are granted the privilege of cross-border movement gradually decreases. For this reason, unlike the scenario I described in chapter 1, identity is less rooted in locality and more in social status, class and income. Transnationalism becomes a privilege, rather than an attribute that is shared by those who are raised in the border region. This scheme points to the formation of a global elite that moves across borders and cultures at ease, while the rest remain anchored in a territory that is heavily controlled by the State. The material and symbolic divisions between these two groups are manifesting in the city’s urban landscape, with new urban developments that tend to be more socially homogeneous, making it easier for authorities (and marketers) to manage the border population.

At this point in time, we all agree that the U.S.-Mexico border is not evolving in the same way as other borders in the world, like for instance, those in the European Union or among wealthy countries. But how do we theorize about these differences? What does the Tijuana experience teach us about States and borders in the global era? Although it would be risky to generalize the findings of this dissertation, I would like to make a few propositions for future follow up. Globalization has indeed redefined the roles of States and borders in the world. However, in areas where there is great heterogeneity, like the case of the U.S.-Mexico border, it has done so selectively, by liberating the flow of goods and capital even as it anchors people in national territories. In these cases, the more transnational flows involve the transit of human bodies, the more restrictions and regulations they face, while the more they have to do with wireless transactions, movements of capital, and even radio and television waves, the more encouraged they become. In other words, when it comes to people, the more “material” transnational flows are, the more restricted they become, while the more “virtual”, the more desirable for State authority.

These trends point to the formation of a global apartheid that traps some people in territories where the global economy has access to cheap labor and captive markets. “Once emancipated from space”, says Zigmunt Bauman, “capital no longer needs itinerant labor” (Bauman, 1998, p.93). In fact, the arbitrary separations between consumption and labor at the U.S.-Mexico border points to a situation in which more people whose move across borders with the purpose of laboring are criminalized, while those who do so as consumers become encouraged and protected. This is becoming more pervasive in international travel, not only in border areas, but also in

airports and train stations. All this is tremendously difficult to enforce, hence requiring the State to maintain and expand its policing capabilities in ways that enable it to distribute and divide people across space. Subcommander Marcos, of the Zapatista Liberation Army in Mexico, posed this clearly when he said that “in the cabaret of globalization the State goes through a striptease and by the end of the performance it is left with the bare necessities only: its powers of repression” (Marcos quoted in Bauman, 1998, p.66).

The world then remains a deeply divided place. However, even in sites like the U.S.-Mexico border, where the differences between north and south are so visibly blatant, this dissertation challenges using the gap between poor and rich countries as clear cut criteria to understand global disjuncture. In Tijuana, studying consumption in its relation to space has allowed me to observe a scenario similar to what some globalization scholars described in the context of global cities, where selected areas keep their global connections, and others remain isolated, disconnected and ultimately abandoned (See for example Borja and Castells, 1997, Graham and Marvin, 2001 or Caldeira, 2000). The global economy is becoming a system in which “the creation of value and intensive consumption are concentrated in segments that are connected throughout the world, while for other broad sectors (...) a transition is setting in, moving from the previous situation of exploitation to a new of structural irrelevance” (Borja and Castells, 1997, p.9).

Tijuana is also a good case in point to illustrate the mobility gap that is becoming more pervasive in today’s world. The division I established between mobile and stationary consumers speaks to a situation where some people have “an

unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and unheard of ability to move and act from a distance, while for others, it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little chance of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere” (Bauman, 1998, p.19). In this dissertation, I have studied for the case of Tijuana how these groups are formed and define against each other. Through the spatial practices of consumption and the cultures of consumption that they develop, I observed how they produce meaning out of the system of exclusion established at the border, and the kinds of identities that arise from it. This is a topic that has not been extensively studied, as “post-modern political analyses often fail to query the degree to which the State sustains its historically dominant role as an arbiter of control, violence, order and organization for those whose identities are being transformed by world forces” (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p.2). I consider this a fundamental topic, for “in a society in which power and function are organized in flows, the meaning of experience is organized on the basis of potentially irreducible identities” (Borja and Castells, 1997, p.12). In other words, how differently people experience transnationality and transnational flows, plays a crucial role in their identity formation. Indeed, Tijuana is a good example of how elites are becoming more and more global while the rest remains physically trapped in territory and how “if the new extraterritoriality of the elite feels like intoxicating freedom, the territoriality of the rest feels less like home ground, and ever more like a prison” (Bauman, 1998, p.23). However, as in a prison, the *Border Panopticon*'s distribution and surveillance of bodies has established a regime where *everybody* is guilty until proven innocent, and authorities are investing tremendous amounts of resources to

develop techniques that discern the ones from the others. For this reason, we should be cautious about assuming that it is only the poor who face restrictions to cross-border movement. Tijuana is a good case in point to see that the territorial control of the State reaches everybody, not only the poor, although wealthy people have more resources to negotiate it.

Globalization is indeed changing Tijuana's social and spatial organization, but it is not doing so by eroding borders and multiplying transnational flows, as was initially expected. Despite not being one of the megacities studied by globalization scholars like Sassen or Castells, who focus more on places like London, Mexico City or Rio de Janeiro, Tijuana shows similar trends. In general, this city is also becoming a discontinuous territorial constellation made up of spatial fragments, functional spheres and social segments (Borja and Castells, 1997, p.28). My experience at the U.S.-Mexico border then coincides with Sassen when she says that "the geography for major new global processes partly overrides the global/national duality presupposed in much analysis of the relationship between the global economy and state authority" (Sassen, 2002, p.2). It is creating new levels of difference.

Indeed, the Tijuana example indicates that people are increasingly divided not only by international borders, but also by internal boundaries that become blatant and visible in the city's urban landscape. These boundaries play a crucial role in organizing social space and are an intrinsic part of the process of place-making (Massey quoted in Paasi, p.81). Therefore, my findings in Tijuana corroborate the writings of authors who insist on the need of theorizing how the "distance" between the rich in the southern side of the border and the rich in the north may be much

shorter than that between different classes in ‘the same’ city. “Physical location and physical territory, for so long the only grid on which cultural difference could be mapped, need to be replaced by multiple grids that enable us to see that connection and contiguity –more generally the representation of territory- vary considerably by factors such as class, gender, race and sexuality, and are differentially available to those in different locations in the field of power” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p.20).

This dissertation has sought to bridge different traditions in border scholarship, primarily post-structuralist approaches that focus on meaning and text, and others that privilege material and economic conditions to picture border social, cultural and political landscapes. Throughout the years I have been occupied with this project, I have reflected upon the structural and ideological constituents of boundary formation, while being sensitive to the ethnographies of daily life, where boundaries are ultimately reproduced (Paasi, 2003, p.471). In this dissertation, I have engaged with the connection between borders and boundaries, and how they produce and enforce each other. However, there is a need to study this relationship more profoundly, not only in terms of space, as I did in this dissertation, but with other subjects in mind, such as for instance, social networks. Even if I address the question of how, at a micro-level, people incorporate the boundaries that divide and distinguish some from others, and how material borders affect social, family and work relations, there is more research to be done on this topic. More detailed and systematic studies would help to clarify, among other things, how border public policy invades social relations in the private sphere.

There has been a lot written about transnationality and the cross-border flow of capital, products, and media images. Along with them, those who connect contiguous national spaces with their constant movement across border bridges and gates have become primary subjects of attention. However, we seem to be forgetting about those who, despite living geographically close to international borders, are being pushed far away from them. These are the groups that governments and marketers consider “structurally irrelevant”, because of their lack of purchasing power and their inability to influence political processes. They have been made invisible by scholars, journalists and politicians, despite the fact that perhaps more than anybody else, they have seen their ways of life severely affected by globalization and border policy. For this reason, we badly need at the U.S.-Mexico border more studies that give a voice to those who cannot move across borders. We need to hear how they perceive the policies that so dramatically affect them, how they relate to the places where they live and how they imagine those that are beyond their reach. We need to be aware of the kinds of connections these groups establish with the global economy, the nation and the other side of the border. We need to do this because, as I have argued in this dissertation, these connections constitute a determinant piece of people’s sense of membership, exercise of citizenship and national identity. And, setting ethical reasons aside, we also need to do it, because no matter how hard we try to control a population with fences, shackles and cameras, history has shown that it is only universal inclusion that has guaranteed, throughout the decades, the survival of the nation-state.

My dissertation responds to an urgent need of deconstructing some of the imaginative geographies, as Said calls them, that so many people from both Mexico

and the United States have assembled about Tijuana. They have stereotyped it, along with the southern side of the border as a whole, as a no-man's land, associated with cheap labor, prostitution, pollution, drug traffic and human smuggling. It is time we ask ourselves how and why this image has become so comfortably engraved in people's minds, strong enough to also condition most academic scholarship. I often ask myself, what kind of consensus these images create for policies that dismember border communities by building fences, both physical and virtual, among human beings. I believe it is about time that we conscientiously get to know the Tijuana of Tijuans (Crosby, *et.al.*, 2002, p.18) and give a voice to a people that have a lot to say about their city. I would like to finish here by quoting Maria Fernanda Ruiz Moreno, a bright high school student with whom I spent some time during my stay in Tijuana. During one of our conversations while waiting in line, she conveyed to me her frustration that those living north of the border, young or old, made no effort whatsoever to really get to know Tijuana. They just bask in their complacency as they imprison the city, and its residents, in a grid of negative stereotypes and bad images. "And it is out of basic decency that they should do it", she said, "Después de todo somos vecinos".

FIGURES



Figure 1. Marketing campaign for a Mexican milk brand: “I am from here and so *Leche Lala*”



Figure 2. Persuasion campaign to buy toys on the Mexican side: “Find the Difference: It is cheaper to buy toys in Mexico”



Figure 3. Products Sold in Open Air Market Stand



Figure 4. Marketing middle class housing: “I am so pretty that I live in *Urbiquinta Versailles*. And where do you live?”



Figure 5. New Housing Developments in Tijuana

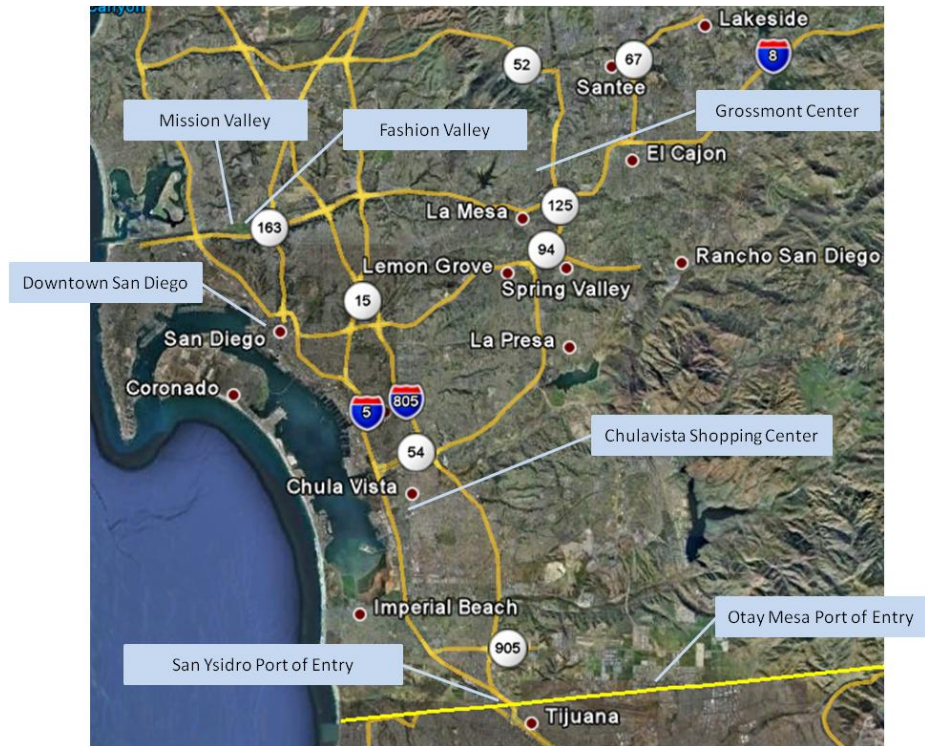


Figure 6. Neighborhood around *Macroplaza*

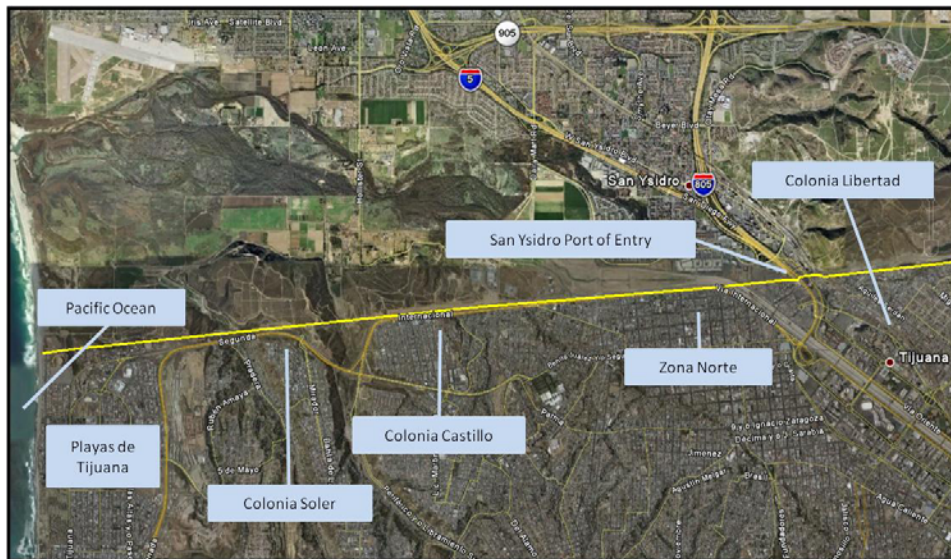


Figure 7. Finding the yuppie niche: “Espacio 5: A space for those of us on the top”

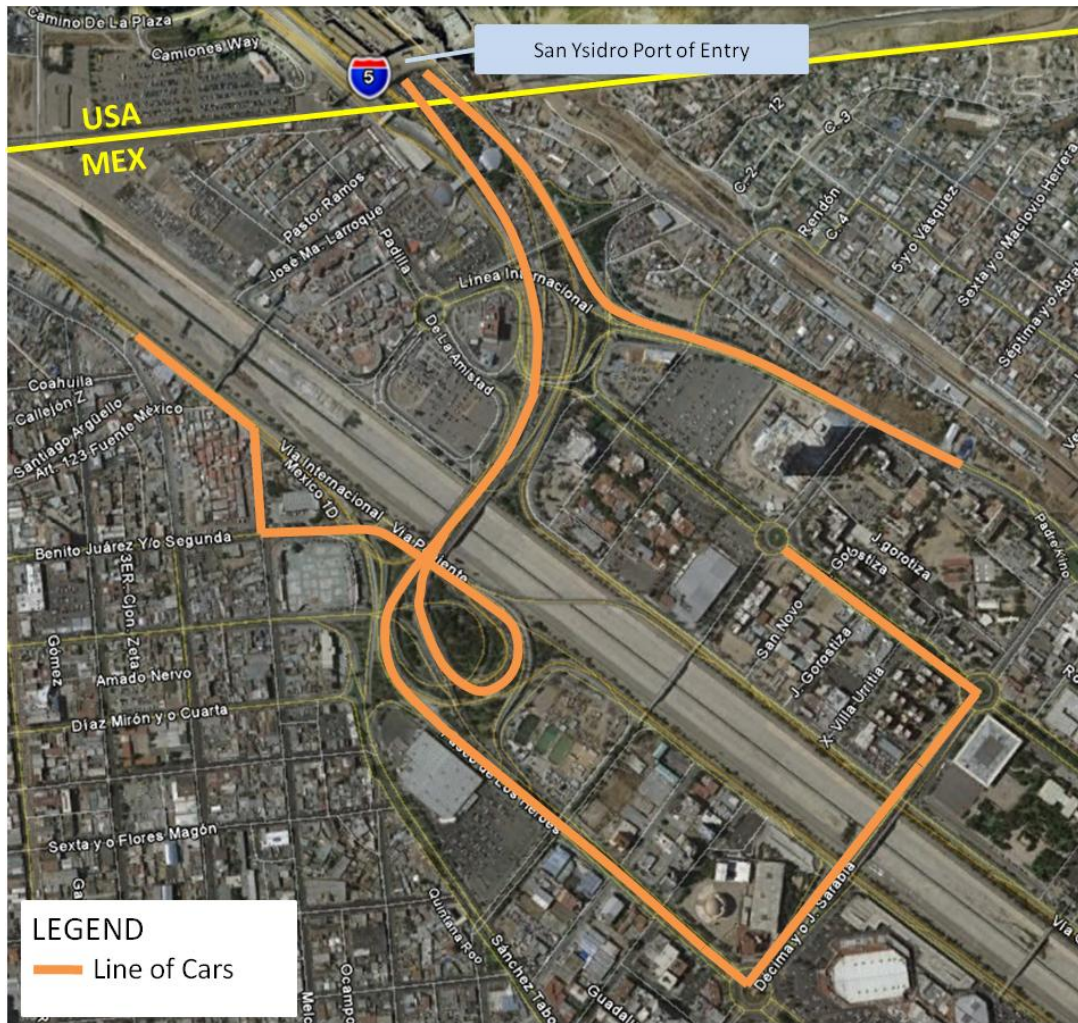
MAPS



Map 1. Shopping Areas in San Diego
Source: www.google.com

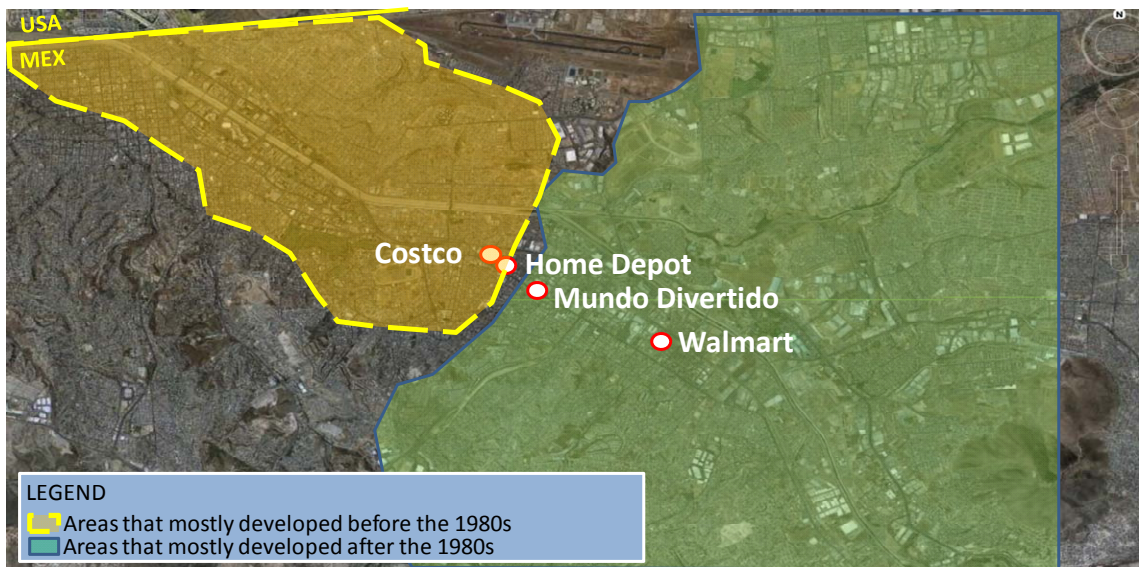


Map 2. Tijuana-San Diego Border Zones
Source: www.google.com

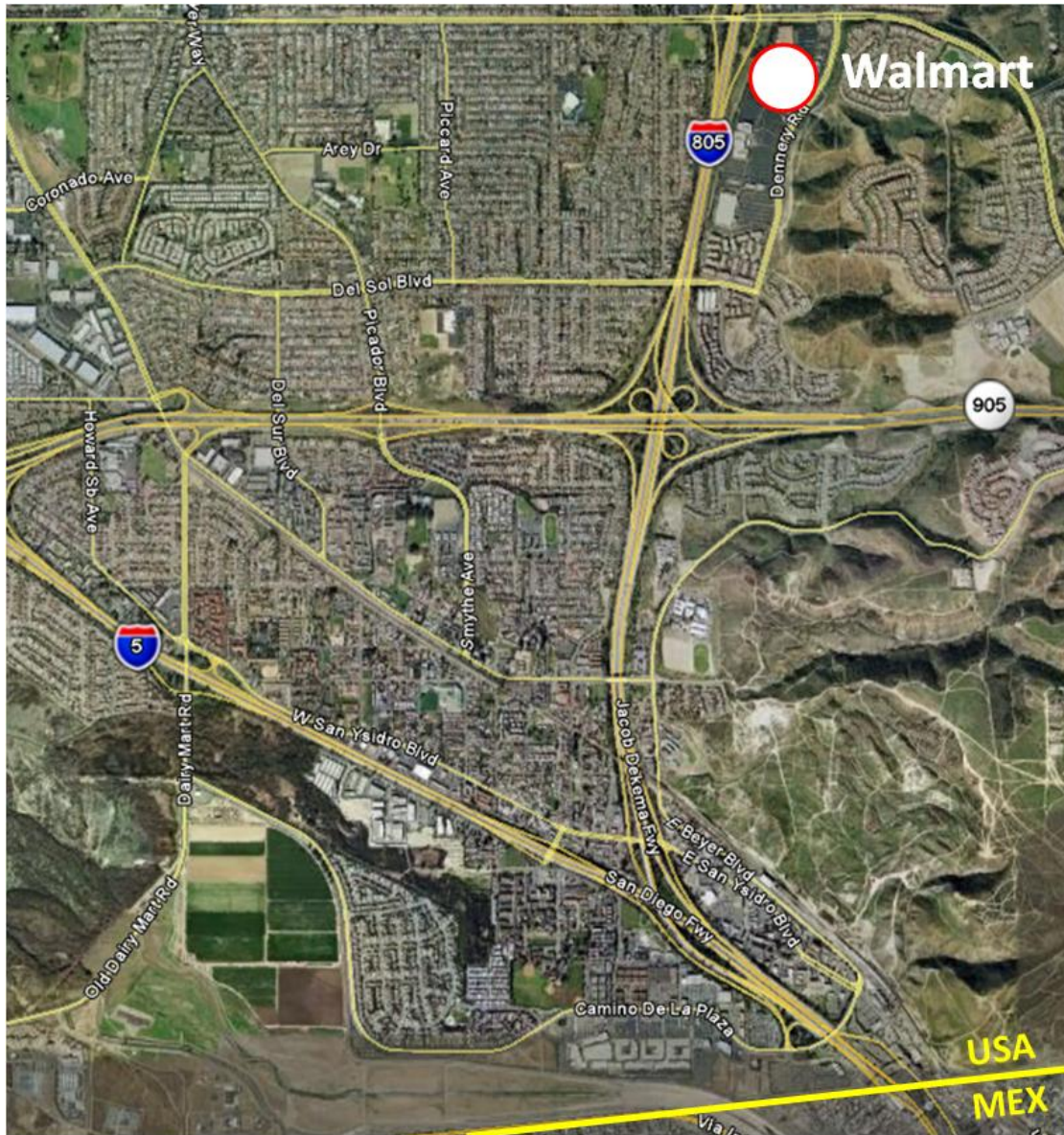


Map 3. Lines of Cars as They Cross the Border

Source: www.google.com



Map 4. Costco, Home Depot, Mundo Divertido and Walmart in Tijuana
Source: www.google.com



Map 5. Walmart Chula Vista
Source: www.google.com



Map 6. Boulevard 2000 that Connects Tijuana with Rosarito and Ensenada
Source: www.google.com



Map 8. Plaza Bonita
Source: www.google.com

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